

Frozen by Byrony Lavery

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large. A ten year old girl is abducted by a serial killer. She is on her way to visit her grandmother and is never seen again. Ultimately the killer "who wishes it were legal to kill girls" is captured. He is interviewed and studied by a doctor Agnetha Gottmundsdottir. The study involves the brains of serial killers which the doctor and her recently deceased colleague feel are like the frozen Arctic Sea, incapable of restraint and remorse. The child's grief stricken mother is also "frozen" in seemingly eternal grief. It's only after twenty years of suffering that she finds redemption,

Written by Byrony Lavery, one of Great Britain's most widely produced playwrights, the play is a strongly stated narrative of the pain and horrors of child abuse. It deals with its consequences and its causes. With only three characters to tell her story, Lavery has to resort to several monologues that dominate most of Act I. The story unravels one person at a time as each actor steps into a pool of light and speaks. The lights fade and the next person communicates directly with the audience. The staging becomes very repetitious. It's not until the very end of the act that we finally have a most welcome two character scene.

Carolyn Lenz Collings plays the mother of the lost child. While she has many good moments, she tends to go for the same lachrymose quality in every scene. Missing for me is a certain toughness or strength that seems to be in the character. She even has, or should have, moments of bitter humor to offer fleeting relief from the grim story. Her self pity causes us to lose interest.

Karen Levy Newnam as the doctor deals with the situation with cold, clinical efficiency. Top performing honors of the production go to Michael Hutson as the psychopathic killer, Ralph. He lets us see deep into his inner being, beyond the many tattoos that adorn his arms and legs. One of the tattoos depicts angels fighting with the devil, a metaphor for Ralph's own being. His gripping performance is both frightening and sympathetic.

Director Betty Xander reveals a sensitive understanding of the play. Her production could be more forceful if she had dealt more imaginatively with those monologues and closed up too many other long moments where we sit in the dark waiting. The duologues lack conflict and are weak in action.

I must mention Hank Sparks most effective backdrop. It's like a sheet of cracked or cracking ice that glows with a cold beauty when the lights play off it. Maybe it's a brain as well with nerve impulses in action.

I don't know that this play gives us any new insights into the dreadful destructiveness wreaked upon innocent, abused children. It does imply that redemption and forgiveness are possible from both sides and are indeed necessary, especially for the surviving victims. This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.