

connection between books and the people

Review

Children ponder life's big questions

Monday's Child
The Barn Theatre, Kilkenny
★★★★

This play for ages four and over presents important life issues in an accessible way. It is a meditation on memory, ageing and death, but writer Brendan Murray uses the frame of a birthday party to distract from some of the bleaker moments presented by the subject matter.

Set within a formal walled garden, it brings together a young girl and an old woman, each looking for something from the other. The young girl seeks a playmate; the old woman isn't sure what it is that she wants. They may have met somewhere before. Months ago? Yesterday? The old woman can't remember. No matter, the little girl, a philosopher, tells her. The past, the present moment, the future, were/are/will be at some stage today.

Murray uses memory boxes as a means of structuring the play, and as the unlikely pair pull out props that paint a picture of the old woman's past, a celebratory atmosphere of excitement builds; the audience can't wait to discover the next surprises. The use of contrast in the play helps to underscore the idea of the life cycle clearly, too: the girl is learning words as the old woman is losing hers; the girl is forging memories, the old woman is forgetting.

Andrew Clancy's set design presents a vision of winter – ashen vines and fallen leaves – that underscores the play's themes. Jack Cawley's sound design ensures the atmosphere never becomes too sombre, and Miriam Duffy's costumes lend a final moment of clarity to the piece.

Monday's Child is a sophisticated piece of children's theatre that will engage young audiences on a variety of levels. It will also provide a fitting conversation-starter for families about Alzheimer's disease.

Sara Keating

Mullingar Arts Centre (February 10th); Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire (Feb 12th); Siamsa Tíre, Tralee (Feb 14th); Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge (Feb 15th)



■ Iseult Casey and Noelle Brown in *Monday's Child*