

Dorsey Theatre Festival, Dorset, VT

THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE by Martin McDonagh. Directed by Theresa Rebeck.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Two men . . . too much!”

Mother-Daughter plays appear to be problematic. Two women in a forced relationship do not get along very well. Mag and her mother Maureen in their cottage in Ireland have an awkward time together, one controlling, one complying reluctantly. Each harping on the other’s shortcomings. When a man enters Maureen’s life we hope for the best but sometimes, as you know, hopes can ve dashed, Especially when you’ve got a Mum like Mag. On a fabulous set by Christopher and Justin Slater this drama plays out in a stage reality that seems inevitable. A happy ending is promised but this is stage Ireland, and not Nitvana.



Kristine Nielsen, David Mason, Maxine Linehan; Photo: Joey Moro

In her large chair Kristine Nielsen looks like a woman diminished by time whose need to be in command forces her hand. She is definitely not what she seems to be. Mag is one of those women who are always a force to reckon with. Maxine Linehan as her daughter is no less a monster, but her occasional softness gives her a personal beauty not to be missed.

In a play so focussed on two strong women the men could easily disappear but director Theresa Rebeck, herself a fine playwright, keeps them firmly in sight. David Mason as Pato and Eimhin Fitzgerald Doherty as his brother Ray have outstanding moments in this production. All are well served by the director.



Kristine Nielsen, Maxine Linehan;
Photo: Joey Moro

This is not your typical summer fare. It is a hard look at hard people who mask the softness within defensively as a matter of self-preservation. It's a play that prompts both tears and laughter. It will fill your mind, but not your soul. It will challenge you and leave you gasping.

It is very well done indeed.

+ 06/25/2024 +

The Beauty Queen of Leenane plays at the Dorset Theater Festival, Dorset Vermont through July 6. For information and tickets go to dorsettheatrefestival.org.