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# A beautiful beast 'Underneath'

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Pat Kinevane in Underneath  
*Patrick Redmond*

## **Fishamble The New Play Company's production of Underneath written and performed by Pat Kinevane, directed by Jim Culleton and produced by Eva Scanlon**

Rating: ★★★★★

First there was "Forgotten," a play about the elderly so good you wondered how Pat Kinevane and Fishamble could possibly get any better. Until the Olivier Award winning "Silent," an astonishing and deeply moving production exploring the heartbreak of homelessness. But things often happen in threes, and rounding out Pat Kinevane's Cobh trilogy comes "Underneath," a play exploring cruelty, beauty, death and loneliness. Performed at The Draíocht, Blanchardstown on June 11th, it's clear that with "Underneath," Kinevane and Fishamble have kept the best wine till last. Winner of The Scotsman Fringe First Award for 2015, and garnering international critical acclaim, "Underneath" is simply a devastatingly brilliant piece of theatre.

Through mist and wind, in a Cobh graveyard, we met Her. An ordinary woman from Cobh who worked in a bar and never travelled further than Cork and Dublin. Yet hers is a story of epic proportions. A story steeped in Egyptian myth and beauty, of people disfigured by lightning, of bullies and bad boys and possible lovers, prostitutes and weather predictors and snail like men who haunt the night. Along the way she shares her insights on perverts from Tesco, the cult of celebrity, the absurdity of fashion driven TV in a world where beauty is often a beast and the beast the really beautiful.

First produced in December 2014, "Underneath" sees the collaborative partnership of writer and performer Kinevane and Fishamble The New Play Company once again working their considerable magic. Visually, textually and performatively "Underneath" shows the hallmarks and stylings of its two predecessors, but refined and developed making the whole richer, funnier and with even greater depth. Visually, the minimal set, the clever interplay of performer and props, exceptional lighting and sound designs craft a gallery of the dark that is utterly mesmerising. Textually, there's the overriding motif, in this case Egyptian, constantly referred and returned to, the life story told through fractured narrative and interwoven characters scaling the heights of humour and the depths of despair. Performatively, Kinevane's heightened physicality contrasts with conversational directness as he addresses the audience, connecting them to himself, Her and her story, with moments of extreme tension punctured by Kinevane's irresistible humour.

The contribution of Kinevane's long-time collaborator, director Jim Culleton, cannot be underestimated. Like Kinevane, Culleton seems to make each new production even better than the last, and his firm yet subtle presence informs everything on stage. The same might be said of Fishamble's creative team of dramaturg Gavin Kostick, composer Denis Clohessy, costume stylist Catherine Condell, choreographic adviser Emma Kane and producer Eva Scanlon, whose considerable collective and individual skills help craft this memorable night of theatre.

It seems inconceivable that anyone other than Kinevane could perform "Underneath," so indelible is his mark upon both text and performance. But even if the future proves otherwise, right now what Kinevane is doing is something incredibly special. Like Olivier's legendary Hamlet, this is one of those rare performances that will be talked about for decades to come. At one point, "Underneath" strikes a cautionary note, asking what would you regret you hadn't done if you were to die suddenly? For you never know what's around the next corner. Don't take for granted that you will always have an opportunity to catch "Underneath." See it now. Travel the miles if you have to. Or else regret for the rest of your days having missed one of the most exciting, hilarious, harrowing and heart breaking pieces of life affirming theatre to be found anywhere. It bears repeating. A devastatingly brilliant piece of theatre. Don't miss it.

Fishamble The New Play Company's production of "Underneath" written and performed by Pat Kinevane, directed by Jim Culleton and produced by Eva Scanlon is currently on tour, along with "Silent" and "Forgotten."

Forthcoming performances include  
Thursday, 7th July, Paisley Arts Centre  
Saturday, 9th July, Dundee Rep

Thursday, 25th August, Town Hall Theatre, Galway, with "Silent" and "Forgotten" being staged on 24th and 26th of August respectively.

For more information, visit [Fishamble](#)



**Chris O'Rourke**

Theatre Examiner

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