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Dublin Theatre Festival 2014 – Spinning will leave you reeling

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Spinning by Deirdre Kinahan produced by Fishamble The New Play Company
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Rating: ★★★★★

For Ireland's first generation of divorcees there was no frame of reference with which to negotiate the emotional, personal, financial and psychological turmoil caused by marital breakdown. Starting afresh after a failed marriage may seem logical and obvious, desirable even. But for many men the legal system's seeming bias in favour of women compounded their sense of failure and hopelessness. While former spouses remained in the family home with their children, from where they built new lives with financial support from their ex-husbands, many men felt they were being condemned to live a half-life, reduced to living in small apartments with access to their children severely restricted. In *Spinning*, the latest play by Deirdre Kinahan, produced by Fishamble, The New Play Company, the tragic consequences of a man unable to negotiate the new normal beyond divorce is explored with unflinching honesty. The result is a compassionate study of

broken souls and shattered families in a poignant and powerful production.

In *Spinning* we meet Conor Burke. Conor is a good man. A family man. A business man. He loves his wife, adores his daughter Kate and, like many Irish men, still worships his Mammy. Conor enjoys family holidays in Spain at his parent's apartment, reading to his daughter before she falls asleep and taking her to her various activities. Life is good as far as Conor is concerned. A sentiment not shared by his wife Jen. Starting to enjoy success as an estate agent, Jen wants to travel, wants adventure, wants Conor to snap the apron strings and is frustrated by Conor's blindness to her needs. Meanwhile Susan, a single mother who runs a small café, is devoted to her seventeen year old, daughter Annie, who mitches from school and wants some excitement in her life. When these two families meet, both are forever changed.

Deirdre Kinahan's excellent script is a master class in craftsmanship. Deceptive in its directness, *Spinning's* thoughtfully layered structure is built around brief episodes that shift seamlessly between past and present. Like pearls of compressed humanity, each episode deepens our understanding of, and sympathy towards, each character and their collective and respective plights. Throughout, humanity is asserted over tragedy, making the tragic all the more potent.

Making her Fishamble debut, Catriona Ennis as Annie, a young girl mesmerised by a man who might fill her need for both a father and a lover, was an absolute revelation. Janet Moran as the unhappy wife, Jen, who wants a better life for herself, struck the perfect balance between sympathy for her husband and her own need for a new life. Fiona Bell's Susan, a heartbroken mother in search of understanding from the man who destroyed her life and stole her daughter's affections, was riveting throughout. As was Karl Shiels, whose gripping portrayal of good man doing bad things, a man whose masculinity and identity are in crisis, was utterly compelling. Jim Culleton's masterful direction allowed both script and performers to breathe and the whole felt natural and unforced. Sabine Dargent's simple set design, suggesting an island in a sea of black, wonderfully captured the isolation, despair and loneliness at the heart of Kinahan's tragic tale.

It's easy to fall into the trap of believing that Fishamble have the Midas touch when it comes to producing new works, particularly works with one word titles that begin with the letter S. But this is to ignore the passion, commitment and hard work that goes into developing new works like *Spinning*. Along with Pat Kinevane's excellent *Silent*, and the wonderfully joyous *Swing*, *Spinning* is yet another triumphant success deserving of high acclaim. For *Spinning* brings together Fishamble's holy trinity: an excellent script, stunning performances and top class direction. Unmissable.

Spinning by Deirdre Kinahan, produced by Fishamble, The New Play Company, runs as part of The Dublin Theatre Festival at Smock Alley Theatre until Sunday, October 12th

Doors open 7.30 p.m. Matinees on Saturday and Sunday at 2.30 p.m.

Tickets: €25.00 and €30.00

For more information go to <https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com>



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