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Festival Connect - Old loves and secrets in a beautiful Brooklyn Sky

October 5, 2012

8:38 PM MST



Beyond The Brooklyn Sky
Red Kettle Theatre Company

Beyond The Brooklyn Sky

Rating: ★★★★★

Whether it's a soccer team, a soul band or a chip van that almost made it, the Irish imagination has a soft spot for the glorious failure. None more so than the glorious immigrant failure who, having forsaken the Irish nightmare and risked everything on the American dream, comes back looking for home, wherever, whatever or whoever that might be. In *Beyond The Brooklyn Sky*, Michael Hilliard Mulcahy has crafted a delightfully funny and poignant tale, wonderfully realized by director Peter Sheridan in an enchanting production by Red Kettle Theatre Company, which looks at the lives and loves, lived and half lived, of the returning Irish immigrant.

In an old dance hall in Brandon, County Kerry, Jamsie, a fatherly boat builder remembers his son Jimmy, lost to the streets of America many years ago. Later that night there's to be a party to honor

Jack Flynn who, along with Jimmy and two other local lads, left for New York in 1988. Jack, a success story with an American accent, is due to arrive momentarily in a single engine plane he has flown across the Atlantic. Just before his arrival the Springsteen wannabe Greg rambles into the hall playing guitar and harmonica. He too left for New York, but now lives in Norway. Brendy, the third of these Musketeers, returned to Brandon many years before and is preparing to set sail across the Atlantic on a three month, single man voyage. Josie, Brendy's long suffering wife can't decide if she's happy he's going or not. Mags, Greg's former girlfriend who still loves him is unsure what to do and Shannon, her young daughter with one foot already in Australia, is curious about her Mam's old boyfriend. With the old gang together again in the hall where they'd had their first drink, first kiss and first ride, the past and present converge, opening up hearts and secrets over a little drink, a little dope and a whole lot of music.

Michael Hilliard Mulcahy's *Beyond The Brooklyn Sky* is an unapologetic theatrical soap opera, full of sentiment and nostalgia, lovers and secrets, and is all the more enjoyable for it. Director Peter Sheridan does a fantastic job marshaling the forces at his disposal to create a memorable, moving and magnificent production that hits all the emotional triggers. Terrific performances by a terrific cast ensured a joyous evening's entertainment. Aidan Dooley as the volatile Brendy, Liz Fitzgibbon as the forward and brash Shannon, and Catherine Walsh as the long suffering wife catching her second wind were outstanding. Jaimie Carswell as the more-American-than-the-Americans Jack and Vinnie McCabe as the old world Jamsie were utterly convincing and created a delightful contrast. Malachy McKenna and Sorcha Fox as the star crossed lovers Greg and Mags had tangible chemistry and brought a high degree of subtlety and finesse to two fine and engaging performances.

Beyond The Brooklyn Sky unashamedly professes loud and proud that famed, deep rooted, Irish belief that where there's life, there's hope. Hope for love, for forgiveness, for moving past regrets and maybe even for a second chance. Even in midlife and even if that midlife is in crisis. Even when that life feels old, jaded or fading. Even if the hope is the flimsiest of threads facing into a dark and unknown future. Even when it doesn't know how, it's knows it will find a way. Knows that life and love are always worth the risk. As is *Beyond The Brooklyn Sky*.

Beyond The Brooklyn Sky runs at The Axis, Ballymun on October 6th as part of The Dublin Theatre Festival on Tour. Doors open at 8.00 p.m. Tickets are €20.00



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