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Dublin Theatre Festival 2014 – Dark devotions in Our Few and Evil Days

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Our Few and Evil Days by Mark O'Rowe
The Abbey Theatre

Our Few and Evil Days by Mark O'Rowe at The Abbey Theatre

Rating: ★★★★★

For Tolstoy, all happy families are alike, but an unhappy family is unhappy after its own fashion. In Mark O'Rowe's latest play, *Our Few and Evil Days*, happy families secretly navigate through their unhappiness in whatever fashion they can personally live with. Michael and Margaret, loving parents to their daughter Adele, are devoted to each other. But Margaret sleeps alone each night on a fold out bed downstairs. Affable Michael sports a violent temper when it comes to protecting the women in his life. Adele hasn't trusted either of them for years and harbours a suspicion she dares not voice. Still, they talk without talking over drinks and dinner as they meet Adele's new boyfriend, Dennis, basking in familial contentment. As alcohol flows, very little happens as seated conversations shift back and forth between the living room and the kitchen. Little is revealed, a little is hinted at, until true intentions are made clear and old wounds reopened, including a brother

who ran away from home many years before. “If I tell you, then everything’s going to change,” they caution. Alas, this proves to be an empty threat. For in *Our Few and Evil Days* there’s lots of talking and telling, secrets shared and kept, but if we learn to understand a little better, nothing really changes.

Written and directed by Mark O’Rowe, *Our Few and Evil Days* is a brave and ambitious tragicomedy built on some unstable alliances. While set and dialogue are steeped in naturalism, these are uneasily set against a supernatural undercurrent of mythical proportions. Similarly, its shifting easily into dark, comic moments contrasted unevenly at times with its dark, tragic themes. O’Rowe’s masterfully crafted dialogue is again in evidence, but excellently constructed conversations often didn’t contain enough to sustain momentum during long exchanges and a dissipation of the plays power could be felt on occasion. Like its sprawling set, *Our Few and Evil Days* felt larger than it needed to be, a case in point being the final scene which detracted from an otherwise excellent ending. But when its disparate ingredients did come together, O’Rowe’s disturbing, taboo challenging exploration of the heart of darkness at the centre of a family was powerful indeed, and perfectly realised in some standout performance.

Tom Vaughan-Lawlor is outstanding as Dennis, the creepy boyfriend doing the “parent thing” with an ulterior motive. As is Charlie Murphy as the insufferably self-righteous Adele. Murphy’s assured performance ensured Adele’s indignation never toppled over into something tedious. Ian-Llyod Anderson as Gary, in essentially a walk on role as an allegedly abusive boyfriend, is also convincing. But collectively and individually Sinéad Cusack, as the deeply wounded Margaret, and Ciarán Hinds as her devoted and protective husband Michael, are simply superb. Such was Cusack’s presence that sitting silently at a table with a glass of whiskey was enough to pull you in completely. Hinds, too, is irresistible as a devoted husband loving beyond the bounds of reason. The effortless chemistry between Cusack and Hinds is a sheer joy to behold with the penultimate scene, where husband and wife reassess their co-dependency and shared misery, being worth the price of admission alone.

In the dark heart of *Our Few and Evil Days*, love and misery co-exist, but life endures when love is the stronger of the two. Love may be twisted, blind, may even be black at times, but salvation is both lost and found in an unholy togetherness. Daring, thought provoking and unafraid to enter the darker recesses of the human psyche, *Our Few and Evil Days* is a brave, disturbing and performance perfect production.

Our Few and Evil Days runs as part of The Dublin Theatre Festival at [The Abbey Theatre](#) until Saturday, October 25th

Doors open 7.30 p.m. Matinees on Saturday at 2.00 p.m.

Tickets €13.00 - €45.00 Concessions €13.00 - €25.00

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

Alternatively go to <http://www.abbeytheatre.ie/>



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