



## **Stone and Ashes**

After moving to a small town, Clayton and his daughter Laura meet local gang members Shirley, Noodle and the dance begins. Drawn together by a compulsive desire to shed the past these four souls gather to reveal dark secrets and buried fears. Tales of betrayal, violence, pain and anger unravel their intertwined lives.

Playwright: Daniel Danis

Director: Sandhano Schultze

Cast: Diane Brown, Kirsten Robek, Mike Stack and Andrew Wheeler

Set designer: David Roberts

Lighting designer: Del Surjik

Assistant Lighting designer: Karen Brown

Sound designer: Andreas Kahre

Costume designer: Nicole Dextras

Production manager: Sherry Mcgarvie

Assistant production manager: John Dickson

Technical Director: Gerald Vanderwoude

Carpenter: Jim Munro

Carpenter: Jason Boshier

Set Painter: David Dorrington

Stage manager: Claire Nicol

Apprentice stage manager: Lorraine Hamilton

Publicist & Poster designer: Helen Nestor

Photographer: Michael De Sadeleer

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## **Awards**

Jessie Richardson award nominations:

Outstanding Body of Work (performance) - Kirsten Robek

Outstanding Body of Work (performance) - Diane Brown

Outstanding Design Team - David Roberts, Del Surjik, Andreas Kahre, Nicole Dextras

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## ***a review from our archives...***

PAINFUL TALE EXQUISITE

It's always interesting to see what lingers in one's heart and mind the day after seeing a show. For me, *Stone and Ashes* left very little residue. Let me make it clear from the beginning that I admired this production: it kept me engaged for an intermissionless hour and 50 minutes, there's some profoundly committed acting in the show, and the script's poetry is sometimes startling. However, the only unresolved question raised for me was: Why did I care so little?

I suspect that a small part of the answer has to do with cultural sensibility. The level of feeling in this Québécois script – or, more accurately, its style of emotional expression – strikes me as melodramatic. When we meet the characters, Clayton has just burned down the house where he lived with his daughter, Laura. The script then flashes back seven years to explore the events that led to the fire. Seven years in the past, Clayton's wife was raped and murdered. Clayton, who moves to the new house to start over, not only grieves his wife, he is grief incarnate: for years, he does not speak.

I got the impression that, on some level, the playwright and this production are celebrating feeling for its own sake – that somehow the sheer scale of Clayton's repressed sorrow is meant to be heroic. For me, though, pure feeling isn't very interesting: I want to see the struggles and complexities that surround it. Partly that may be my shrivelled Anglo self reacting to a more passionate sensibility, but I can think of many passionate Québécois plays that I like very much – plays in which extreme feeling is leavened by humour and made comprehensible by psychological complexity.

There is some beautiful poetry in *Stone and Ashes*. Noodle is terrified of Gulka, the animal that lives in his skull, and, in one of the most successful lyrical passages, he talks about why he loves to watch snow melt: "It's the only time when nothing is dead, nothing is sad." The poetry of the play was a large part of what kept me attentive for nearly two hours. Too often, though, playwright Daniel Danis flattens his own imagery. For instance, the basement of Clayton's house is full of stones, and, as if that metaphor for grief wasn't obvious enough, the playwright explicates it a number of times. He even tells us that Clayton's heart is buried beneath the stones. I felt like hollering, "I know! I know that already!"

The production does contain some extraordinary acting. Diane Brown is juicy, sexy, and credibly tough as Shirley, and she remains grounded even within the aerial act of the script's poetry. Andrew Wheeler sustains Clayton's agony, then transforms it into gorgeously simple, open sensuality. Mike Stack's Noodle is appropriately psychologically fetid – you can almost smell the stench – though I never felt the character's physical threat. Kirsten Robek does fine work as Laura, but, perhaps because of her clean, strong beauty, I found it hard to get a sense of the character's vulnerability.

I've concentrated almost exclusively on my difficulties with this show because the difficulties interest me. In fairness, I must say again that *Stone and Ashes* is worth seeing – because it provides a chance to explore a different sensibility and because it has some strengths, especially the acting. But it seems to me that *Stone and Ashes* is attempting to be archetypal, and, being devoid of mystery, only succeeds in being schematic.

PHOTO CREDIT: Michael De Sadeleer

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