When the Rain Stops Falling

Andrew Bovell’s *When the Rain Stops Falling* is one of a few great Australian plays that serves to define our national identity while exploring universal themes. Without a doubt, the highlight of the Pembroke Dramatic calendar in term 2 was the powerful Year 12 Drama production of Bovell’s epic work. It was directed by Peter Woon and presented at Wright Hall in early June in a truly remarkable production.

Bovell’s compelling story reaches across two continents (England and Australia) and through four generations from 1960 to 2039, weaving a search for identity through disconnection, pain, heartbreak and loss to understanding, acceptance, love and hope.

This personal story is set against the vast Australian landscape in a play filled with moments of magic realism as ordinary lives become extraordinary. In 2039 the world is underwater, it is raining constantly in Bangladesh, natural disasters abound and fish has become a delicacy—all, no doubt, the product of unrestrained global warming and human neglect. Yet, in this heightened world, there remains hope.

Peter Woon’s production was a stark exposé of the powerful emotions at the heart of the play. This theme was reinforced with a compelling minimalistic set designed by James Kennedy; Alex Portus’s costumes, which are similarly shabby, worn and faded; and Matthew Thorne’s haunting compositions for piano, clarinet and singing bowl.

The Year 12 Drama students this year are a talented group and many performances are etched in memory—James Kennedy’s heartbreaking portrayal of Henry Law; Alexandra Hosking as the troubled roadhouse waitress Gabrielle; Lizzie Faggoter as the older Gabrielle and Alex MacFarlane as Joe, the typically kind and stoic Aussie farmer.

There were too many outstanding moments to mention—Alexander Possingham’s breathtaking opening monologue as Gabriel; his heartfelt reunion with his son Andrew (Nick Duddy); Will Kenny Roberts’s moving portrayal of Gabriel’s spiritual reunion with his father’s spirit at Uluru and the glorious final scene that reveals the hidden keys to years of human emotion and experience.

Commendation must also be given to the crew, led ably in a professional manner by Stage Manager Bethany Flight and Assistant Stage Manager Che Randall. Similarly, special mention must be made of Joel Wearne’s striking poster, ticket and program designs, which evoked a sense of mystery before the play even started.

Congratulations to Peter Woon and all the students and staff involved in creating such a memorable production. In a year of devastating natural disasters on both the local and the global scale, *When the Rain Stops Falling* seems even more poignant, challenging us to reflect carefully on our own actions and to tread carefully to protect our world for future generations.

Julianne English
Head of Arts