

Review from Lance Bassett

The final play in BCP's 2017 season is Lovesong by Abi Morgan, an incisive and worryingly accurate portrayal of how time elapses over forty years of marriage, one minute you're setting up home, the next you're contemplating downsizing.

The characters Maggie and Billy arrive in the US as newlyweds and he soon opens a practice as a dentist. I missed the fact they had moved to the States for some reason but soon caught up. The rest of the play is a whirlwind with more comings and goings than Heathrow airport, the cast entering and exiting in countless scenes engaging with each other as the younger Billy interacts with his wife first as a young inspired bride then as time passes the frail, sick Maggie.

There are only four people in the cast as young and older Maggie & Billy. They intermingle frequently as in one heart-wrenching scene, the older Billy dances with the younger Maggie as he remembers how she was. The older Maggie was beautifully portrayed by Trish Thompson who gave the real impression she had given up on life and was ready to go as it were.

As the characters intertwine in the bedroom late in the play, most comings and goings are through a rather remarkable bed, disappearing and returning in a trance, a trick of which Paul Daniels would have been proud. Another nice touch was when the actors turned on an invisible tap on the fourth wall and the sound of running water started.

So with time passing illustrated by projected videos of flocks of starlings and photographs of moments in history, the play progressed at a pace with the young Maggie played faultlessly by Nicola Dixon wanting a child desperately. Billy, (vivaciously played with some style by Ian Nutt) consoles her assuring her the time will come, but never does. Director Tara Lacey drew maximum emotions from the piece with a simple but innovative set of kitchen, garden and bedroom, melodic music and dance, incorporated into the frequently surreal plot.

Andrew Whiffin played the older Billy and I was totally convinced. He looked a worried man throughout. As a retired dentist in the US I would have thought he was in clover but I think instead he was in turmoil, trying too hard to help Maggie by fetching her pills from the pharmacy, insisting he accompanies her to the doctors, you know the sort of thing, the husband thinks he's helping, the wife thinks he's not.

With no audible cues, the cast seemed word perfect and this being the opening night, I was particularly impressed by a lengthy tirade the older Billy gave with vigour towards the end of the play.

So full marks all round to Banbury Cross Players, "Lovesong" is a fitting end to their 2017 season.