

THE SUNDAY AGE

NOVEMBER 2 2003

Lorilei

Where La Mama, 205 Faraday Street,
Carlton **When** Until November 9
Tickets \$14/\$10 **Bookings** 9347 6142
★★★½

Lorilei Guillory's six-year-old son Jeremy was killed by Ricky Langley, a paedophile with a lengthy criminal record. In itself this was a tragedy, of course, but what made the case remarkable was Guillory's determination, after his original murder conviction, to oppose the death sentence imposed on Langley.

Writer Tom Wright has, in a sense, had an easy time of the script, which is taken partly from a BBC television interview with Guillory, partly from documentary information about Langley, and partly from sparse information about a visit Guillory made to Langley on Death Row. But this material is seamlessly put together with stark effect and not a syllable wasted.

Lorilei is staged with sparse simplicity, a cheap kitchen table, some chairs and a glass of water. It relies on a remarkable and accomplished performance from Anna Galvin, who plays Guillory with restraint, intensity and conviction. She is accompanied in the latter part of the performance by Tom Wright as Langley, sitting in chains at the table, immobile and mute. He is a solid reminder of the reality of the case, removing it from any possible illusion of romanticism. Guillory's anger and pain are intensely and palpably real, and it is only the operation of a deeply felt revulsion to judicial life-taking that sees her through the ordeal in something like working order.

Lorilei deserves to be seen by many. Its compelling script and a moving performance make it one of the better productions of this year.

Bill Perrett



THEATRE

LORILEI:
A MEDITATION ON LOSS

Written by Tom Wright, directed by Nicholas Harrington, La Mama, until Sunday

Helen Thomson Reviewer

Power in utter simplicity of Galvin's art

Lorilei: *A Meditation on Loss* is a companion work to Tom Wright's 2001 death-row monologue *This Is a True Story*, but stands alone as a magnificent performance in the hands of Anna Galvin (pictured).

It was a tribute to her acting and to Wright's powerful script that the audience seemed barely to breathe during the performance.

Lorilei, the mother of the six-year-old boy murdered by pedophile Ricky Langley, tells her story of a voyage to hell and back. Her redemption is not brought about by religion, although she attributes it to "grace", but results from her attempts to save Langley from the death penalty.

Lorilei sits alone and her words are drawn from an interview she gave to a BBC film crew. Galvin reproduces her South Carolina voice, its plaintive cadences and simple vocabulary emphasising her powerlessness. Yet she emphasises that hers is not the story of a victim — that is her son's story — although she was not always strong.

Galvin's is a disarmingly simple performance with an engrossing subtlety, and also most powerfully convinces us that she speaks the truth, not simply of events, but of the heart that speaks it.

Her conviction that it is wrong to judicially murder even those who have themselves murdered is so strong it needs no justification or argument. Revenge, she suggests, would make a murderer of her son.

When she finally meets Langley in his condemned cell, he sits beside her: they don't make eye-contact until the very end, nor does he speak.

Wright as Langley silently creates a deeply damaged character. This corroborates what Lorilei tells us of his wretched story; a childhood of neglect and sexual abuse. It is an extraordinary performance: a shambling, ugly figure of both pathos and menace.

Lorilei's simple dignity makes a graphic contrast, and her words express the morally strenuous attempt to speak only the truth in the act of giving testimony. She is carefully giving witness, and this has an irresistible power.

It is extremely moving, but also uplifting, despite its harrowing aspects, and certainly one of the most impressive acting performances of this year.

Let's hope expatriate Galvin finds reason to stay in her home town.

Herald Sun

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Murderous reactions

REVIEW



THEATRE

Lorilei by Tom Wright and Nicholas Harrington

Where and When: La Mama, Tue, Thu, Fri, Sat 8pm, Wed, Sun 6.30pm, until Nov 9

Reviewer: Kate Herbert

ALTHOUGH capital punishment has been abolished in Australia, it still exists in the US.

This short monodrama, *Lorilei*, provides a glimpse of the horrific experience of Lorilei Guillory, mother of a murdered child whose killer, Ricky Langley, is on Death Row.

Myriad elements make this piece unique and important, not least the consummate performance of Anna Galvin as Lorilei.

Galvin delivers a compelling monologue based on a BBC interview with Lorilei.

She sits at a plain table, addressing us, her audience, telling of the loss and grief.

Galvin is luminous in anguish as she unveils the noble, fragile heart of Lorilei.

She touches us with Lorilei's unadorned description of her journey from the initial shock of Jeremy's disappearance, through the discovery of his body and the subsequent "walking coma" she experienced.

In an almost Brechtian style, Galvin reaches us emotionally but compels us to think, educating us about the human rights issues while telling her personal story.

Lorilei reveals her astonishing desire to save the killer from death.

She does not forgive him, nor does she doubt his guilt.

She simply does not believe we have the right to kill him.

The simplicity of this production and its pure theatricality make it riveting theatre.