

Theatre review: 3 Seconds (A Play, a Pie and a Pint), Traverse Theatre (****)



Tense, terse and tight, Lesley Hart's *3 Seconds* makes a powerful and sometimes unsettling start to the Traverse Theatre's spring season of *A Play, a Pie and a Pint* lunchtime shows.

The set-up is familiar enough: a stranger arrives in a family home, and by the end, uncomfortable truths are dragged out into the light of day. In this case it's the bedraggled, dripping-wet Mary who has braved the Moray floods to climb to the the ultra-clean, clingfilm-wrapped highrise flat of Diane. A tragedy has occurred; there has been retaliation; and Mary is there to make amends – and, maybe, reveal the truth.

It's the economy of Hart's language that lends the show its particular strength, and her slow dripfeed of details about the event that has led to the play's central confrontation. The final revelations – before a somewhat brusque conclusion – may not quite live up to the lengthy build-up, but even in a short piece, Hart expertly positions plot twists and turns to make us challenge our judgements and question our moral perspectives.

Cara Kelly is compelling and entirely convincing as a weary Mary, at once regretful of the past yet quietly determined to uncover the truth. Claire Knight stays just the right side of obsessiveness as the ever-scrubbing, grieving mother Diane, and Helen Mackay is suitably mouthy as her belligerent teenage daughter Christine.

Director Hamish Pirie keep things moving briskly while still

allowing the tensions to pile up, and his ear for the ebb and flow of conversation, as well as for what's left unsaid, is impressive. *3 Seconds* might only last 40 minutes, but it still packs quite a punch.

[3 Seconds](#) continues at the **[Traverse Theatre](#)** until Saturday 23 February. Next week's show in the A Play, A Pie and a Pint season is Douglas Maxwell's **[A Respectable Widow Takes to Vulgarity](#)** (26 Feb-2 Mar). The season continues until 23 March.

Image by Leslie Black