



A HARROWING TALE – SIDHE AT THE ROAD THEATRE

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photos by Matt Kaiser

Brutal and raw, *Sidhe* is a terrifyingly powerful theatrical experience. Expect to feel shell-shocked once you stagger out of the auditorium and don't be surprised if you find yourself reaching for a stiff drink. This critic felt bruised, assaulted and thoroughly gripped by the unfolding of **Ann Noble's** pitch dark drama, but that's nothing compared with what these four astoundingly brilliant actors put themselves through each night.

Sidhe is actor/playwright **Ann Noble's** seventh play. First was *And Neither Have I Wings to Fly*, a gentle period family drama about a budding romance, set in rural Ireland during the 1950s. This quaint and cozy piece of theatre was staged by The Road late in 2007.

The Pagans is **Ann Noble's** second Irish play, a kitchen-sink drama also set in rural Ireland. Other works include *The Boarding House*; *Ariadne's Thread*; *By Moonlight*; and *Alighting Home*.

With her latest play, *Sidhe* (pronounced "Shee") **Noble** combines the spooky mythology of Irish folklore with seedy south side Chicago in a harrowing story about letting go of the past.

Sidhe proves a startlingly abrupt change of setting, pace, mood and approach for this daring playwright. It's almost as if **Noble** is trying to demonstrate her versatility with some kind of murderous vengeance. *'You liked those pretty little stories I spun? Well, now watch this!'*

Louise (**Ann Noble**) runs a bar in Chicago that her cop brother-in-law Vernon (**Rob Nagle**) frequents. Prickly conversations between the two reveal a common loss.

When a mysterious and taciturn Northern Irish couple rent the illegal room above the bar, the pair bring a whirlwind of deeper violence into the lives of these two broken people, still recovering from their own, still fresh bereavement.

*Set in a Chicago bar and the flat above it on Chicago's south side in the early 1990's, Sidhe tells the bittersweet story of Louise, to be played in this Road premiere by the playwright **Ann Noble**, who illegally rents the seedy flat above her bar to Conall and Jacquelyn (**Patrick Rieger** and **Jeanne Syquia**) in order to put some much-needed cash in her pocket after both her father and her sister's deaths. It is clear this strangely aloof Northern Irish couple is on the run, but not so clear from whom or from what.*

*Louise must also deal with her brother-in-law, Vernon (**Rob Nagle**), a resentful Chicago cop who can't seem to get over his wife's death and spends his days drinking away his sorrows—until he meets the new upstairs neighbors and, like Louise, becomes entangled in the horrifying events of their lives. Both Louise and Vernon become fascinated not only by Con's calculating and violent behavior, but also by the disturbing pictures Jackie obsessively draws. They are pictures of the Sidhe, which, in Irish folklore, are supernatural creatures. In Jackie's world, however, they are something altogether different...*

While the entire of four give superb performances, special mention should go to **Jeanne Syquia** for her ability to evolve from a timid, angelic and child-like woman to reveal another side of her personality entirely, something that is akin to demonic possession. That she can achieve this transition with such veracity and ferocity makes it all the more astounding.



The thick Northern Irish accents coupled with the South side Chicago accents, plus the complex backstory, does leave us a bit confused at times. This is a play where you're not sure if you got it all, but that just means it keeps percolating in your brain for a long time afterwards.

At the stunning conclusion of this harrowing drama, director **Darin Anthony** offers the distraught audience a grace note in the form of a deeply affecting, quiet curtain call. This touch was surprisingly tender after

so much bitter violence.

It's taken me two weeks to attempt this review. The material is so ferocious and dark that I found I couldn't bring myself to revisit the experience.

If you are a fan of visceral, powerful theatre, containing some unspeakable acts and scenes as well as a deeply moving storyline, then I am urging you to **SEE THIS PLAY** and decide for yourself.

Special Events:

Post-Show Q&A

Sat., Feb. 27th

with Director Darin Anthony, Playwright Ann Noble and Cast

Post Show Soiree

Sat. Mar. 6th

Mingle with Director, Playwright and Cast, explore the set, nibble savory treats and partake of wine and beverages.

[The Road Theatre Company](#)

5108 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood CA 91601

Runs: until Saturday, March 20th, Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.
Sundays at 2 p.m.

Tickets: \$30.00

Box Office: (866) 811-4111

Check their [website](#) for ****Pay-What-You-Can Nights**** — next is **Sunday, February 21st.**

The Road Theatre, located two blocks south of Magnolia Boulevard. in the historic **Lankershim Arts Center**,

5108 Lankershim Bl.. North Hollywood.

For further information, call 866.811.4111 or log on to their