

away by michael gow script

Away by Michael Gow is a profound and evocative play that delves into the themes of human relationships, the complexities of family dynamics, and the transformative power of nature. Set against the backdrop of Australia in the 1960s, the play explores how the characters confront their personal struggles while also embarking on a journey of self-discovery during a summer holiday. In this article, we will explore the key elements of the play, its characters, themes, and the impact it has had on Australian theatre.

Overview of the Play

Michael Gow's "Away" premiered in 1986 and quickly became a staple in Australian theatre. The narrative revolves around three families who are on a holiday to the coast, showcasing their interactions and the various emotional and psychological challenges they face. The play is structured in three acts and employs a mix of realism and poetic language, allowing for a rich exploration of its themes.

Setting

The play is set during the summer holidays, primarily in a coastal town in Australia. The natural setting plays a crucial role in the narrative, serving as both a backdrop and a catalyst for the characters' transformations. The beach symbolizes escape, freedom, and the potential for change, reflecting the inner journeys of the characters.

Structure

"Away" is divided into three acts, each revealing different layers of the characters' lives and their relationships with one another. The structure allows for a seamless flow of time, moving from the initial conflicts to moments of reflection and resolution.

Characters

The characters in "Away" are multifaceted and represent a range of human experiences. Their journeys are interwoven, creating a tapestry of emotions that resonate with audiences. Here are the main characters:

- **Tom:** A teenage boy struggling with the recent loss of his father, Tom embodies the theme of grief and the journey toward acceptance.
- **Coral:** Tom's mother, who is dealing with her own sorrow while trying to maintain a

sense of normalcy for her family.

- **Gwen:** The matriarch of another family, Gwen is a strong-willed woman who often clashes with her husband, leading to tension and conflict.
- **Harry:** Gwen's husband, who is more laid-back and represents a counterbalance to her controlling nature.
- **Rick:** The son of Gwen and Harry, Rick is a young man on the brink of adulthood, grappling with his identity and relationships.
- **Alice:** A friend of Tom's, Alice represents youthful innocence and the hope for new beginnings.

Character Dynamics

The interplay between these characters highlights the complexities of familial relationships. Each character faces personal challenges, and their interactions often reveal deeper issues. The tension between Gwen and Harry serves to illustrate the strain that can exist within marriages, while Tom's grief showcases the impact of loss on family dynamics.

Themes

"Away" encompasses a range of themes that resonate on both personal and universal levels. Here are some of the most prominent themes:

1. **Grief and Loss:** The play poignantly addresses the theme of grief, particularly through Tom's character. His journey towards acceptance reflects the universal experience of loss and the struggle to move forward.
2. **Family and Relationships:** The dynamics within and between families are central to the narrative. The characters' interactions reveal the complexities of love, conflict, and reconciliation.
3. **Nature and Escape:** The coastal setting serves as a metaphor for escape and transformation. The beach represents both a physical and emotional refuge, where characters confront their inner turmoil.
4. **Coming of Age:** The play explores the transition from adolescence to adulthood, particularly through Tom and Rick's characters, who navigate their identities amid familial expectations and societal pressures.

Symbolism

Gow employs various symbols throughout the play to enhance its themes. The ocean, for instance, symbolizes both the unknown and the potential for change. It serves as a place of healing for the characters, where they can confront their fears and emerge transformed.

Impact on Australian Theatre

Since its premiere, "Away" has had a significant impact on Australian theatre, both in terms of its storytelling and its exploration of cultural identity. The play has been performed extensively across Australia and internationally, resonating with audiences for its relatable themes and emotional depth.

Cultural Significance

"Away" reflects the Australian experience, capturing the essence of the country's landscapes and the complexities of its people. The play addresses issues such as loss, identity, and the search for meaning, making it a vital part of the Australian theatrical canon.

Critical Reception

Upon its release, "Away" received critical acclaim for its poignant exploration of human emotion and relationships. Critics praised Gow's ability to weave together the personal and the universal, creating a narrative that resonates with audiences of all backgrounds. The play's blend of realism and poetic language has also been lauded, contributing to its status as a classic in Australian literature.

Conclusion

In summary, "Away" by Michael Gow is a powerful exploration of grief, family dynamics, and the transformative nature of the environment. Through its rich characters and themes, the play invites audiences to reflect on their own experiences of loss and the complexities of human relationships. Its cultural significance and emotional depth continue to resonate, ensuring its place in the pantheon of Australian theatre. As audiences engage with the play, they are reminded of the enduring power of storytelling to illuminate the human condition.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of 'Away' by Michael Gow?

The central theme of 'Away' revolves around the journey of self-discovery and reconciliation, exploring the complexities of familial relationships, personal growth, and the impact of nature.

How does Michael Gow use the setting to enhance the narrative in 'Away'?

Michael Gow uses the Australian landscape, particularly the beach and natural elements, to symbolize freedom and personal transformation, contrasting the characters' internal struggles with the external beauty of nature.

Who are the main characters in 'Away' and what roles do they play?

The main characters in 'Away' include Tom, Vic, and Coral, who each represent different facets of human experience, such as loss, hope, and the quest for connection, driving the narrative forward through their interactions and conflicts.

What role does the concept of 'escape' play in the plot of 'Away'?

Escape is a significant motif in 'Away', as characters seek to break free from their pasts and personal burdens, using a holiday as a backdrop for transformation and new beginnings.

How does 'Away' address the theme of death and loss?

'Away' addresses death and loss through the characters' reflections on their pasts, particularly in the context of a deceased loved one, prompting them to confront their grief and ultimately find healing.

What dramatic techniques does Michael Gow employ in 'Away' to convey emotions?

Gow employs various dramatic techniques such as monologues, symbolic imagery, and contrasting settings to convey the characters' emotional journeys and enhance the thematic depth of the play.

How does the structure of 'Away' contribute to its storytelling?

The structure of 'Away' is non-linear, using flashbacks and parallel narratives to intricately

weave together the characters' stories, reflecting their interconnectedness and the passage of time.

What significance does the character of Coral hold in 'Away'?

Coral serves as a pivotal character representing the complexities of motherhood and the struggle between personal desires and familial obligations, embodying the emotional core of the play.

In what ways does 'Away' reflect Australian cultural identity?

'Away' reflects Australian cultural identity through its exploration of the landscape, social dynamics, and the themes of mateship and resilience, highlighting the unique experiences of Australians in the context of personal and collective journeys.

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