

Worlds collide on this blue planet

Icelandic author creates a world where youth is eternal

By Bruce Raymond

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Most of us would probably have a hard time rhyming off the names of Icelandic literary figures, particularly playwrights, so it is very gratifying to be introduced to Icelandic literature through the work of Andri Snær **Magnason**. He is not only a playwright. He is a poet, a novelist and a man with something important to say.

Blue **Planet**, currently being presented on the mainstage of the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, was created from the playwright's childhood memories.

Magnason pulls material from such uncomplicated incidents as his grandmother being duped by a vacuum cleaner salesman or the time he ate a meal cooked in a teflon-coated frying pan. While there might not appear to be anything particularly profound in those incidents, **Magnason** has taken them and several others and spun a story that may not be particularly Icelandic, but is certainly universal in its theme, particularly but not exclusively for children.

In the play, a group of young people live on a blue **planet** in an unnamed galaxy where there are no adults. They have been there for hundreds of years in a blissful state of permanent childhood. One day a visitor arrives. He is a vacuum cleaner salesman but, more important, he is an adult. He offers to stop the sun in its tracks so that each day the children can have a full 24 hours of fun, which includes being able to fly, without being interrupted by the darkness of nightfall. All he asks for performing this miracle, which he does by putting a nail in the sun, is to take away the children's youthfulness. The children eagerly accept his offer, ignoring the realization that if their side of the **planet** is in eternal sunshine, the other side of the **planet** must be plunged into eternal darkness. Eventually, of course, the children are made to realize the cost to others of their incessant search for fun. The story is best described as a parable, almost Biblical in its scope, and a real challenge for the production team charged with bringing it to life as a stage play.

Allen MacInnis has done a great job of directing his actors. They soar above the stage like butterflies, cavorting about in their newfound freedom. However, the laurel wreath must be placed on the heads of the design team, headed by Judith Bowden and the aerial choreography of Sven Johansson. Even the stagehands deserve a bow. All the actors are convincing in their roles. Any performance weaknesses are too minimal to be worth noticing. Paul Dunn and Audrey Dwyer, as Brimir and Hulda, are the two youngsters who venture into the dark side of the planet and return much wiser to the sunny side. They motivate the rest of their friends to examine the cost to others of their nonstop partying. Ryan Field, Jessica Greenberg, Clarence Sponagle and Jennifer Villaverde play a multitude of parts and do so well. Kevin Bundy is the adult visitor from out of space. He is excellent in his role, particularly toward the end when he admits that in his own eyes, he is a man "born to be King."

However, once again I must applaud the staging, which is as inventive as any I have ever seen at that theatre. This play deserves a long run with lots of sold-out houses. Blue Planet plays at the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, 165 Front Street East, Toronto, until March 20th. Tickets are available by calling 416-862-2222.