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Left – Christopher Connelly and Michele Williams. Photo – Nick Merylees

Neil La Bute is one of the USA's best loved and well-known playwrights. *In a Forest Dark and Deep* is a two-hander, telling the story of a brother and sister caught up in a terrible and complicated dynamic where they force each other to reveal cherished values and then betray them. The pathetic fallacy of a storm outdoors mirrors the tension between the two. At first Bobby seems like a simple red-neck, sexist, racist and violent towards women; however, he is fiercely devoted to his sister and desperate to protect her. Betty is the intellectual dean of a liberal arts college in the midwest, married with children. She has a secret. As it turns out, despite his attitudes, Bobby is the character with the most integrity. The audience's loyalty shifts between the two as the truths of the story are revealed. The theme of the slipperiness of reality is explored here with relish; the shifts of power between the two is utterly absorbing. This play is occasionally reminiscent of Sam Shepherd's *True West*.

Betty has called on her brother to help her rid her holiday cabin of the previous tenant's belongings. The two circle each other psychologically, quarrelling then and making uneasy peace. While he is clearing bookshelves, Bobby finds a photograph and things start to unravel. Winterfall Theatre's production of *In a Forest Dark and Deep* is directed by Denis Moore. Christopher Connelly, last seen on stage at the MTC in *Happy Ending*, and Michele

Williams are superb in this text-heavy, emotionally fraught drama. Their work is compelling and edgy. The dialogue is excellent but some of the business on stage can be awkward – the part where they dance together, for instance. I was surprised by the direction of some of the play's key moments (Bobby finding the photo being one); they are rushed and seemingly glossed over.

This is another gem from Winterfall Theatre. Another satisfying and intelligent production with the outstanding performances typical of the company.

Winterfall Theatre Company presents
In a Forest Dark and Deep
 by Neil La Bute

Directed by Denis Moore

Venue: Theatre Husk 161a Heidelberg Road Northcote
 Dates: 25 October – 11 November, 2012
 Tickets: \$32.00 – \$18.00
 Bookings: www.trybooking.com

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