

Should death always be a grave matter?

ART has a morbid fascination with mortality. From the zombies rising from the grave in *Night of the Living Dead*, to Morrissey bravely singing about the stones in Cemetery Gates, Mozart's Requiem or Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* where the knight plays chess with the grim reaper.

Funnily enough, much of the drama around death comes in the form of comedies. Think of Orton's bleak farcical tale *Loot*, where Hal and Dennis stash their ill-gotten gains inside Hal's mother's coffin.

But is it appropriate – or even tasteful – to laugh at death, the one painful subject that comes to us all?

Psychologists note that laughter can be an immediate reflex reaction to news of tragedy. Freud argued that humour was in fact a coping mechanism, an explosion of laughter being a biological distraction to deflect from the unspeakable.

Mocking mortality is part of a wider thing we call trench or gallows humour. And it is healthy in

that it softens the blow of the horrific (when my own father was told by a doctor he had two months to live, he turned to me and said, "Well there's no way your mother can stop us getting Sky Sports now").

Great humour has the sniff of death about it and lends an edge to art, occasionally portraying a victory for humanity. Genius Jewish comic Mel Brooks marching up and down as Hitler may make us feel uncomfortable or even embarrassed, but it does not lessen the impact of the image of bodies piled up outside of Auschwitz. Instead it says, "Here we are, evil dictator. Good managed to defeat you. And now we're taking the living..."

Grief is made all the more bearable when we share laughter, particularly around memories. Like dearly departed Sal in *Bleeding with Mother*, I suspect that wherever our loved ones are after their passing, they are joining with us and remembering that the most important thing is to celebrate, cherish and laugh at life – even when it is ended.

Pete Gibson
July 2017

BLEEDING WITH MOTHER



Written and Produced by
SARAH CASSIDY

The 53Two Theatre - 4, 5, 6 July 2017
As part of the Greater Manchester Fringe Festival 2017

GRIEF brings out the worst in folk, and there's nothing like a family bereavement to ignite a rift amongst it's nearest and dearest. In some cases a heart stopping beating can be quickly followed by pulsating pound signs ignited by grieving survivors.

There are more real life stories surrounding families falling out over money than I've had hot dinners. It startles me how quickly people can turn from grief to greed, no matter what the cost. So what if that greed was hiding under the floorboards and the greedy folk couldn't get to it without grief.

These were the questions I posed when creating Bleeding with Mother. Helped along the way by fond memories that I have of my grandparents home in Preston. The only people I know to keep a stash of cash under their living room rug. Granddad quite often snuck a fiver from underneath the rug with a whisper of 'Sssh don't tell your nana'.

Their home inspired the world of this play which I hope pays respect to growing up and living on a housing estate in the north. The feeling of community that feels absent nowadays. Where the neighbours would just pop in for a brew and a natter, and folk knew what everyone was up to. I found out more about life by listening in on my mum's conversations with the neighbours than watching episodes of Dallas and Dynasty. It was a great introduction to the world of characters. Big, bold, strong northern women and feckless husbands.

I'm delighted that Bleeding with Mother is part of this years Greater Manchester Fringe Festival. It's a dream of mine to be part of an outstanding celebration of creativity right here in this wonderful city of Manchester. Thanks for popping by and supporting us.

'Family, family. That's what's important Carol' – Randall Nolan in Bleeding with Mother.

Sarah Cassidy

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DIRECTOR EMMA BIRD



The winner of last year's Best Director Award at the Liverpool Page to Stage festival for Welcome to Paradise Road, Emma's CV is rich in comedy and emotional drama. She has previously directed A Passion for Rationals at the Brighton Fringe Festival and Blackout at the Etcetera Theatre in Camden. Emma co-founded the Liverpool Comedy Improv troupe in 2015, and teaches and performs improv regularly in Cheshire and Merseyside. Emma's last visit to 53Two Theatre was as director of the acclaimed, Someone's Got To Do It, a 25 minute monologue as part of the BAPS Theatre company's North West Wonders showcase. Emma is also a superb actor and improviser!

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Dave Cowan of Wythenshawe Funeral Services. Also to Greg Allen, Sandra Simpson, Kelly Charlesworth, University of Salford's School of Arts and Media, Debbie Manley and Elspeth Moore.
 Special thanks from Sarah Cassidy to Mike Heath's Write for the Stage courses & Studio Salford Development Week.
 This play is dedicated to the spirit of 9 Thurnham Road.



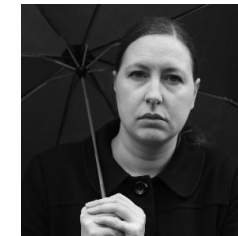
PETE GIBSON
as Randall Nolan

Pete's extensive theatre work includes Not About Heroes (The Lowry), Virtuoso (Three Minute Theatre), A Midsummer Night's Dream and As You Like It (Open air theatre runs, Anglesey) and Stolen Moments (Z-Arts). This is his second appearance at 53Two, having just played toilet attendant John in the celebrated Someone's Got To Do It in May. TV and film: From Darkness (BBC1) Prey (ITV drama). Pete is about to star in a major NHS advertising campaign – as a singing doctor!



JENNIFER DERBYSHIRE
as Sheila

We are delighted to be joined by Jennifer who hails from Sheffield and trained at the Carney Academy. Her many credits include: Between Ten And Six (Leicester Square Theatre London), Unforgettable (Nottingham playhouse) Time Passes-Listen (Theatre Deli Sheffield) and The Wakefield Mystery Plays. Film includes Lily (Dee Fifteen Films) and The Devil's in The Detail (Studio of The North).



LOUISE WILSON
as Carol Nolan

Louise is one of the founding members of the BAPS Theatre company who staged Di and Viv and Rose at last year's GM Fringe and produced North West Wonders, a hugely popular showcase at 53Two, where she starred in Foundations. Louise has followed bleeding with Mother from its first rehearsed reading to its full stage production. Theatre credits: Doe (The King's Arms, Salford), Bubblegum Pink Kiss (Studio Salford), and Sweeney Todd (The Bolton Octagon). TV credits: From There to Here (BBC1) Between the Lines (BBC1) and Hollyoaks (Channel 4).



DAVE JORDAN
as Doug

Dave has recently performed in Jim Cartwright's Cartwright Cabaret (The Robert Powell Theatre Salford). TV credits – Simon Amstell Carnage (BBC) and a new comedy for Channel 4 called Lee and Dean.