

Centre, in the Sports Hall. The RSC On Tour takes the theatre itself, as well as the actors and stage crew, to parts of the country rarely visited by large-scale professional drama companies.

In less than 24 hours, a 500-seater auditorium is erected in a space normally occupied by badminton courts and five-a-side football.

The exhilarating anticipation created by the transformation of this familiar hall into a wonderful new shape with exciting possibilities was buzzing round the building.

It was as if magic was in the air: The theatre had come to town.

The play - Julius Caesar - is as disturbingly relevant to the present day, as it was when Shakespeare wrote it in the sixteenth century.

RSC's modern dress production was deliberately ambiguous as to its contemporary points of references.

Outstanding among the actors was Christopher Saul as Caesar. He had the stature and presence to evoke the arrogant confidence of a triumphant leader, and the exaggerated swagger of the showman craving public attention and flattery.

Zubin Varla's Brutus was conscience-racked, but also short-tempered and domineering when angry; an unsympathetic characterisation.

Cassius (Adrian Schiller), the arch-conspirator, and Mark Antony (Gary Oliver), Caesar's hatchet man, were both identifiable as modern political types.

The audience clapped and clapped until the badminton nets shook!

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and finally, that have shaped the area and the features that give the North Pennines its distinctiveness.

Concentrating on the development of lead mining in the area, the book highlights the various ways that the industry has changed both the landscape and the local communities. As the writers point out,

more than 2,000 years of exploitation of the area's reserves of lead ore not only carved a new landscape but also developed the area's industrial heritage of mine sites, washing floors, smelt mills, villages and farmsteads. The book also focuses on the

remains of outstanding natural Beauty. (Published by Durham County Council, 98pp), by Ian Forbes, Brian Young, Clive Crossley and Lesley Hehir, photographs by Graeme Peacock, is available at the *Teesdale Mercury* shops at Barnard Castle, Middleton-in-Teesdale and West Auckland, priced £9.95.

# This play confronts real issues with raw honesty

**TALK ABOUT THE PASSION**  
by Graham Farrow  
*THE ARC Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees, until October 9.*

**HOW does a father deal with the violent death of his six-year-old son at the hands of a paedophile?**

Is the tabloid media distorting and undermining the values of our civilised society?

These are the two big questions addressed in *Talk about the Passion*, a seventy-minute two-hander playing at The ARC Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees until Saturday 9 October.

Mick Miller, father of the murdered child, briefly becomes aspirant author Jason Carroway, to obtain an interview with Evelyn Ayles, who has edited a highly successful book written by his son's murderer.

Miller is a working-class Teessider whose life has collapsed around him, but who still dreams of his son playing for the 'Boro'.

Ayles is one of Thatcher's children; she places a high priority on personal grooming and her driving force is making money, for herself.

Their clash is physically and verbally brutal. The father must have our sympathies, but when he seems intent on strangling and/or raping the woman, we fear for her safety no matter how obnoxious she has been.

But not for long. Evelyn Ayles is repulsively resilient.

The sickening point at issue is that Mick Miller has not only to come to terms with his son's murder, but that he has also to live with the way society, under the corrupt influence of the media, treats him, the victim.

Vilified unjustifiably by the press, he is rejected by his wife, his mates and his own father.

He has to watch as strangers salaciously pore over the murderer's book, reading the horrifying details of his son's torture.

Ayles' attempt to match his

angry despair with her experience of a botched abortion strikes the wrong note for Miller, and indeed for the audience.

Is she telling the truth or dramatising it? However, she has clearly recovered her sang-froid.

Her ensuing manipulation of Miller's need for revenge is chilling, not least because one suspects an ulterior motive.

The play ends as it began: Evelyn Ayles, successful book editor, receives her post. She also gets her just deserts.

Playwright Graham Farrow, who lives and works in Yarm, reports that the initial idea for the play came from the media reaction to the murder of Jamie Bulger in 1993.

Media events since that time, which have shown increasing evidence of the manipulation of the news and public opinion by the tabloid press, underline the importance of the question he asks here in such starkly tragic circumstances.

Actors Daniel Ainsleigh (currently appearing in ITV's *Steel River Blues*) and Phillipa Peak are utterly convincing in their two very different roles.

Ainsleigh is outstanding. He has perfected the way in which working-class men tell a story: it is a style that verges on 'stand-up', until you realise that what he is recounting here, is desperately, heart-rendingly sad.

Peak cleverly matches Ayles' ultra-smooth exterior with glimpses of her ruthless determination within.

The set, designed by Michael Taylor, underlines the discontinuity between Mick Miller's experiences and Evelyn Ayles' attitude to life. Her office is coolly understated in white, with pretentious abstract art in red and black.

If there are tickets left for the last few performances, do not miss the opportunity to see this play which confronts a real contemporary issue with raw honesty.

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and prints for Torkshire and South Durham.  
7.30pm in the Masonic Hall, Middleton-in-Teesdale.

● **Cotherstone 50/60 Club**  
Harvest festival and AGM.  
7.30pm in the Village Hall.

● **Middleton in Teesdale carnival committee**  
Meeting, including AGM  
7.30pm in Middleton Primary School.

● **Glass Engraving Exhibition and Demonstration**  
Demonstration by local artist Lawrence Staley.  
10am-4pm daily until October 12. Castle Gallery, Witham Hall, Barnard Castle.

● **Flower Class**  
Middleton Village Hall every Thursday for ten weeks.  
Tel: 01833 622378

**Friday October 8**

● **Harvest Festival Service**  
Followed by Harvest Festival Supper.  
St Mary's Staindrop, 6.30pm.

● **Pic'n Mix concert**  
With wine and savouries. A collection will also be taken for 'Send a Cow to Africa'  
Winston Church, Winston.

*Out and About* is a free service. Deadline for entries is Thursday at 12noon for the following week. We regret that we are currently unable to take *Out and About* entries over the phone. Send entries to *Out and About*, Teesdale Mercury, 24 Market Place, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NB, email them to [editor@teesdalemercury.co.uk](mailto:editor@teesdalemercury.co.uk) or drop them into our office in Barnard Castle or Middleton-in-Teesdale. Every effort will be made to publish every entry received, however, pressure of space means we regret that we can not guarantee publication. To guarantee publication of your event details contact our advertising department on 01833 636065 to discuss a What's On advertisement

## New fundraiser at Bowes

THE Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle has appointed a new member of staff to its team.

The new post of Fundraising and Sponsorship Officer has been taken up by Kate Le Sueur, 23, who began work at the prestigious Museum early September. Her role is to generate income for the Museum, a registered charity, to support the restoration and development project along with conservation projects, acquisitions and the dynamic exhibitions programme.

The Arts  
is

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