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Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Theatre Review   **TALK ABOUT THE PASSION**   New End Theatre

This absorbing two-hander by Graham Farrow haunts you for some time after the one-hour play has come to an end. Hitchcock or even Christie would have been impressed by the innumerable twists and turns that the playwright has achieved.

The action takes place in a publisher's modern office. Designer Michael Taylor has used the New End's stage to create a realistic set which is fresh and inviting.

The sinister music at the outset sets the tone for what is to follow. We are introduced to Evelyn Ayles (Phillipa Peak), a thirty something publisher who is busy with her superficial life. She barely notices Jason Carroway (Daniel Ainsleigh), the scruffy author who makes his way into her office. He sits patiently waiting for her to finish her phone conversation. When she does, she tells him that she is uninterested in his manuscript, *The Wishing Well*, as the characters are nothing more than clichés. He leaves the room quietly, but a few seconds later returns, and when she is not looking, locks the door behind him.

Initially, his rant is amusing. Who cannot feel for the dejected author? Only, after a short time, it becomes apparent that his motives are more ominous. From now on, the audience is subjected to sheer physical violence towards Evelyn. At one point he drags her on the floor and attempts to strangle her with a tie. Our breath is as pained as Evelyn's. When he flicks a cigarette lighter, we fear for her safety. His intention? His son has been murdered and he believes Evelyn is responsible for making the youngster's killer famous through a book deal.

Through this chilling and stimulating thriller the duo discuss the nature of justice and blame. In watching the brilliant actors we are confronted with many taboos, particularly that of a child's murder and the sheer violence that lurks beneath us.

Whilst *Talk about the Passion* is tough to watch, it is necessary viewing. Full marks go to Darren Tunstall for directing this packed performance.

*Sharon Garfinkle 2004*