

THE BREATH OF LIFE

Christine Harris and HIT Productions

Dunstan Playhouse, Adelaide Festival Centre

Review by Rod Lewis

It's ironic that the title of this play is the thing it needs most.

David Hare's mind-numbing drama lacks friction and is only spared from being complete drudge by the occasional witty line and Helen Morse.

Thank God for Morse! Her stagecraft and natural talent creates an interesting and strong character to watch, despite Kate Cherry's stilted direction.

Kirsty Child is as stagey as the tedious script playing "the other woman" who is now in the same situation as wife number 1 – the husband has left her for someone younger.

This is the story of the two wives meeting for the first time, having shared a husband many years ago. The potential for emotion and conflict gives way to sharing memories of the man and making cups of tea - ho hum.

The unnatural dialogue is repetitive and forced, and Cherry keeps her actors seated for most of the play. The presentation would probably work well in an intimate setting, but not in the cavernous Dunstan Playhouse, where the actors are lost and Adam Gardnir's open set doesn't fill the stage.

"The Breath of Life" is currently touring Australia, including regional centres, so it is no surprise that it is designed to slot into a variety of venues. The theatres need to be small however, for both the script and performance to have any chance of working.

"Desperate Housewives" is a better option.