

NOW

Sturdy Bridge

★★★ (out of five)

By Jon Kaplan

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Memory is a tricky, subjective thing. What you recall from a family occasion might not be what your sibs remember; you might as well have been at different events.

Those differences filter through the lives of the three sisters who have gathered to care for their dying mother in Daniel MacIvor's warm, emotionally charged *Marion Bridge*, presented by the Company Theatre under the playwright's direction.

It's a simply structured piece, a series of two- and three-handers and a monologue for each sister. The fourth voice, offstage, is the audio of the TV soap *Ryan's Cove*, whose melodrama offers a safety valve for the household tensions.

The writing is tenderer than much of MacIvor's solo work, its comedy flowing from individual idiosyncrasies and the way people rub up against each other. The fine onstage chemistry lends the piece the flavour of reality.

Caroline Gillis's Agnes, who fled small-town Nova Scotia and a child she was forced to give up, is a brittle drinker who thaws over the course of the show.

As the husky-voiced Louise, the innocent with yens she doesn't understand or acknowledge, Emmy Alcorn gives her laconic lines a humour laced with pathos. Anchoring the show is Sarah Dodds's Theresa, the nun who tries to order everyone's life and enjoys playing the martyr.

As revelations of past events and resolutions in the present give each sister increasing three-dimensionality, MacIvor and his cast bring a tale that's ordinary in the best of senses to an emotionally satisfying ending. We understand and identify in some way with just about everything that goes on, and could be watching anyone's family, even our own.