

## DEATH IN BOWENGABBIE

### KRYSTOFF RAW REVIEW

By Peter Maddern



It seems Bowengabbie is somewhere in like Tasmania, an old rural town that has lost its only industry and is now slowly dying off, its youth has mostly fled and the only reason they would venture home would be for funerals (yep, it seems very like Tasmania).

Oscar (Elliot Howard) is one such former member of the town; educated, now an architect he is soon to be wed and then off to create new places in the Middle East.

But he has come home, for the first time in 15 years, for Aunt Jeannie's funeral and there he confronts his past, past family, former friends, lost loves and an unhappy home.

The trouble for Oscar is that over the space of just a few weeks he keeps having to come back as yet another reli bites the dust and is disposed of in the most bizarre farewells imaginable.

Caleb Lewis' play is performed by just one man, here Elliot Howard, as both the narrator and Oscar as well as a host of secondary characters. It's 60 minutes of intense scrutiny and his arrival on the stage before a darkened audience is somewhat akin to his character's return to the faces of his upbringing – a potential mix of support and dread, of flattery, salvation or devastation.

Howard does a masterful job switching between his characters including his contemporary Gary and grandfather, Pop, as well as the only likely love interest remaining in Bowengabbie, Abi. Along the way he jumps puddles, pays his respects, gets into fights and expertly carries his audience through the morbid, the extraordinary and the very funny. Peter Green's direction and Stephen Dean's lighting are deft touches that transport us to various locales and in and out of moods without the histrionics that lesser crew may have strayed into given Mr Howard's solitary confinement.

Post the Fringe, *Death in Bowengabbie* is a delightful way to usher in the new season of theatre.

Kryztoff Rating 4K