

**Lottes Gift | Ensemble Theatre****PRINT**Written by **Erin White**

Saturday, 21 April 2007

*Photos - Steve Lunam*

**Lotte's Gift** is a story of family, love, loss and pride. It is beautiful, enchanting, humorous and heartbreaking. It is what any good play should be. But it is more than just good. This performance, is inspiring.

Written for and performed by the amazingly talented classical guitarist **Karin Schaupp**, **Lotte's Gift** is yet another impeccably crafted play by **David Williamson**. This amazing collaboration of two masters at their best, tells a tale that stretches over three generations of women, and it is a story that is very close to home. Based on the memories and history of Karin's grandmother '*Lotte*,' with interludes and comments by her mother '*Isolde*' and aunt '*Trudy*,' **Schaupp** and **Williamson** weave together a performance that harnesses both of their abilities. The fine writing and direction by **Williamson**, combined with **Schaupp's** natural performance style and incredible guitar solo interludes, harmoniously complement each other and the story.

A solo performance piece, **Schaupp** plays not only herself, but also her German grandmother *Lotte*, and even at times *Isolde*, *Trudy* and *Lotte's* husband *Heinrich*. *Lotte*, who the story is largely centred around, was once a beautiful operatic singer, whose career was impeded by a jealous husband, who ruined her one chance at fame and fortune. The rest of her life is lived as a subservient housewife, whose determination encourages her granddaughter *Karin* to pursue her own passion for music. *Lotte* tells of

times during World War II; of the love of her life whom she could never be with; of her wicked mother-in-law who made her marriage hell. And *Karin* allows *Lotte* to tell these stories in her own words.

A clever distinction in vocal differences, and a subtle change in lighting, allows **Schaupp** to leap from one character to the next. Acting as the narrator to her grandmother's story, **Schaupp** relies on her ability as a storyteller to hold the multiple characters together. Her natural and serene delivery as the narrator opposes her flamboyant and proud delivery as *Lotte*. The transitions are seamless and the illusion is easily believed, proving **Schaupp** as a formidable theatrical talent.

As for the guitar solos, I am left utterly speechless. To witness such a master at work is an honour. The way **Karin** floats from story to music is like a flowing dream. Her nimble fingers and passionate delivery encapsulate the emotion of the story. **Karin Schaupp** is clearly one of those people who was destined for performing from the start. Not only does she play guitar with emotion and finesse, but she also infuses that same passion into her acting.

While there wasn't much physical action in the piece, the set design easily provides any visual clues that are needed. From the obvious elements of the slideshow of photos projected above, to the subtle details of framed paintings of balls and parties, and photo frames on mantle pieces, designer **Graham Maclean** allows the eye to wander with ease throughout the performance.

The writing, which infuses so many characters, times and places into one continuous monologue, is exactly the type of skill you'd expect from **David Williamson**. Occasionally however, some lines felt a little forced, like **Karin** was trying to explain too much to the audience. However these explanatory asides were used regularly, and once it was understood as a convention of the play it was easier to accept, though still a little unusual.

It is ironic that a story which is based on a woman's ruined chance at fame, will probably have an incredible amount of success. The next generation should always live better than the last. I guess now, through **Karin**, *Lotte* has the fame she always wanted.

Christine Dunstan's &amp; Ensemble Theatre's Production

**Lotte's Gift**by *David Williamson***Venue:** The Roundhouse**Preview:** 18 April**Dates:** 19 April – 5 May**Times:** Tue & Wed 6.30pm, Thu – Sat 8pm; matinees: Sat 21 April 2pm, Tue 24 April & 1 May 11am, Sat 5 May 2pm**Duration:** 2 hours including interval**Bookings:** [www.roundhousetheatre.com.au](http://www.roundhousetheatre.com.au)

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