

A MAP OF THE REGION

Reviews:

Bruntwood:

The play was shortlisted for the Bruntwood competition at the Manchester Royal Exchange in 2011.

Reactions so far:

Really quite brilliant. The scene is set perfectly and the pervading sense of terror and life in a Soviet state is well drawn. Misha in particular is a great cipher of this menace. (James Bierman, Donmar)

A Map of the Region is a real triumph – meaty and relevant political ideas embedded in a fast-paced, complex story. The characters are full-blooded. It's a big and ambitious project and I can really imagine it working. (Nina Steiger, Literary Manager, Soho Theatre)

When work is of such quality as this, reading it is a pleasure. This is a terrific script; heartbreaking, layered and dense, the drama builds an ever-increasing hold on the emotions. The characterisation is also very strong and engaging and the dialogue, which weaves around them, is convincing and satisfying. (David Prescott, Associate Director, Theatre Royal, Plymouth)

I found it gripping, unpredictable and intriguing and is obviously something that has been pursued with a real passion and conviction. The structure is sound, the language is terrific, the characters are well rounded, but most of all I admire its theatricality. It could be a very direct and very absorbing piece for its audience. (Max Roberts, Artistic Director, Live Theatre, Newcastle)

An arresting, highly original, thoughtful, moving and intelligent piece. While frequently comic, it is mainly characterised by tenderness and sadness. The writer has a terrific gift for (and confidence in) the stage rhythm of cross purpose dialogue and use it to great effect, magnified by multiple languages being spoken. And there are lovely characterisations in this script that will make it vivid in production – mainly the authentically amoral Investigating Officer, Misha, with his doomed desire, and the dramaturgical loose canon of Ema, supplying a verbal underscore that mischievously careers in and out of relevance, but conjures some of the writer's best evocations of nationhood, family and patriotism. Caught in the middle if it all, Piret is always on the back foot and beautifully weak for all her defiance and evident capability. (BBC report)

The play really struck our early readers with its huge success, both technical and emotional, in delivering a story that straddles the epic and the domestic. One of our readers felt there is something “mysterious and intriguing in the play and its world that completely draws you in. Something specific and beautiful in its own odd way.” What really impressed us in the process of shortlisting for the award was the fact that the writing allows the family to take

on and represent a country's struggle with its identity in a new period of its history, but ensures they lose none of their individuality and oddity as a group. For us, this distinctive quality sits in Tonü's imaginative world, in his relationship with his grandmother and in Piret's very human qualities and failings that counterpoint her courage and conviction. The judging panel for the award unanimously responded to the play's strong conviction that this was a world that we should have heard of, one that has been ignored by our recent history but continues to shape the continent we live in. They talked about the play's "searching conviction and passionate attempt to dramatise something important" and the "lyrically rich language" that allows it to operate within different registers and across a breadth of tone. There is an imaginative scope to the play but also a "dirt and grubbiness" that they admired. They loved the theatricality of its stage images and the conceit of hearing characters who can't understand one another speaking the same language. Alongside an excitement about the play's ambition and hugely achieved narrative, they were also interested in it as a play that's uncomfortable and searching for both ends of the political spectrum, the British left in particular. It was a piece of work they felt they could see produced to great success. (Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting 2011, judging panel)