

KNOWLTON – RINGS OF CHANGE

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 30TH 1994

A travelling site-specific play set in and around the ruined church and neolithic circle at Knowlton, Dorset, performed by a local community theatre group, assisted by ACE (Arts in the Community Events).

The play was a journey through place and time, with a series of chronologically ordered “scenes” which explored imaginary events taking place at Knowlton at various times from pre-history to the 19th century.

This format, although not a new one, seemed to take some of the audience by surprise, as many came equipped with fairly substantial chairs, which they carried with them on the “journey”, and which I am sure did not add to their pleasure, or to that of the spectators who were less burdened!

However, the play itself was well directed, written and performed, and the result was an absorbing and at times very beautiful production. The live music made an important contribution to the atmosphere of the piece, and the sculptures, which marked particular features of the site, were in harmony with the mood of the show.

Costumes were imaginatively designed, and although apparently simple, worked well in the diverse contexts of each scene. One slight criticism was that many of the cast wore white sweat-shirts (or similar) under their costumes, which “shone out” in the dusk, and looked inauthentic (*Handy hint coming up: a dip in cold tea would have toned them down!*).

However, this was a small matter when set against the considerable achievement of the production, which told its story clearly, reflecting the conflict between Pagan and Christian cultures, and the effects of disease and greed on the place and its people. Throughout, the magical quality of Knowlton shone through, and I am sure that the performance will have enhanced awareness of the importance of the site for the local community.

The choreography of the cast in relation to the site was excellent, and the show was truly site-specific, respecting and working in harmony with the environment of Knowlton. The directors, writers and everyone involved in this production should be congratulated on an excellent show.

Ruth Harris
DIRECTOR – DORCHESTER ARTS CENTRE

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