

FORBIDDEN LOVE:  
Paul Keating, left, and  
Piero Niel-Mee in  
*Kenny Morgan*



STAGE PERFORMANCE  
OF THE YEAR

# PAUL KEATING

## 'CLASS ACT'

IT MAY BE PAINFUL TO WATCH BUT *KENNY MORGAN*, THE REIMAGINING OF TERENCE RATTIGAN'S LOVE LIFE, SHOULD CATAPULT THE LEADING MAN INTO THE BIG TIME

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**O**ver the past 10 years mainstream theatres seem to have become less interested in works with a gay theme, presuming, apparently, that as there are less legal inequalities between the mainstream and LGBT+ people, there is nothing left to specifically say about our lives.

Offensive and short sighted? Absolutely.

Thank goodness that when they do come along, plays with gay themes can be as brilliant as *Kenny Morgan*, by Mike Poulton, which is coming to the end of its second run at East London's premier fringe theatre, the Arcola.

The play is, in a way, a resetting of history. In 1952 a play called *The Deep Blue Sea*, by the most acclaimed British playwright of the time, Terence

Rattigan, was staged. It followed a tragic relationship between a man and a woman — but it was, in fact, inspired by the author's relationship with a young actor called Kenny Morgan.

With homosexuality being illegal at the time, Rattigan changed the gender of the leading character. This new play is an imagined version of the events that inspired Rattigan's story.

It's painful to watch, being about a relationship that cannot be openly expressed. At its centre is a stunning performance from Paul Keating, who, in the title role, perfectly articulates the terror of a man trapped by historical circumstance.

Keating — nominated for an Olivier Award for his role in *Tommy* in 1996 — played Straight Dave in the Pet Shop Boys' musical *Closer to Heaven* and has also appeared in *The Full Monty* and (for clarity) my play *Blowing Whistles*.

But he should be far more successful than he is. His performance in *Kenny Morgan* has been applauded by the press. *The Times* said he is "exceptional," *Stage Review* called him "mesmerizing" and *whatsonstage.com* said he gives a "brilliant... career-redefining performance."

We agree and are thrilled to give him the Attitude Award for Stage Performance of the Year. **A**

**Kenny Morgan finishes its run on 15 October. [arcolatheatre.com](http://arcolatheatre.com)**

"KEATING PERFECTLY ARTICULATES THE TERROR OF A MAN TRAPPED BY HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCE"

