

DUNCAN MACMILLAN  
**LUNGS**



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In a time of global anxiety, terrorism, erratic weather, and political unrest, a young couple wants to have a child but are running out of time. If they over think it, they'll never do it. But if they rush, it could be a disaster.

## **Lungs Details**

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## From Reader Review Lungs for online ebook

### Tom Romig says

I went to DC's excellent Studio Theatre with a friend to see a play the name of which I can't recall only to find out it was sold out. We bought tickets to Lungs, being performed at the same time. It's everything you'd want in a play: well written, engagingly acted, funny, insightful, moving. So, when my wife and I were at the Studio a week ago and I saw the script for sale--last one on the shelf--I bought it and immediately read it. Because of the nature of the play, just reading it may not work well, but having seen it a reading was just fine.

The two characters are working through their complicated, sometimes half-baked feelings about bringing a child into the world. This involves their relationship, their temerity at taking this irrevocable step into adulthood, and their ideas about the future of the planet. Their 90-minute dialog moves without markers through hours, from one day to another, over months, and eventually through a lifetime. An extraordinarily satisfying experience for the playgoer or reader, one that stays with you.

(The edition pictured is actually the U.K. version. I read the U.S. version, which the British author Americanized.)

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### E says

A raw play about the thick and thin of a relationship and also environmental degradation. In present day, a couple debates whether to have a child, based on their own fears and hangups as well as on whether it's fair (on the planet, on a baby) to bring a child into a disintegrating world. The play spans the couples', as their relationship spins out and the planet heats up.

Duncan MacMillan says you should write plays around questions that make you nervous, things you sometimes believe even though you know you shouldn't, because you'll express something the audience feels that ambivalence about too, and capture something grand. MacMillan's done that here and because of it the play is sharp. Sometimes too sharp for me, in that at times it was hard to read because I could see the worst of myself, the most distorted, in the characters. They're people very much states of stress, perpetual stress. Which I guess mirrors brilliantly the environmental stress the play is about, and that MacMillan started the play wanting to write about without knowing what kind of form it would take. A really sad and well-realized story, and a perfect container for it too. I imagine audiences in tears at the end.

There are plenty of things here that would fail in the hands of a lesser writer, mostly inarticulate speech and conversations that never quite complete themselves. This verisimilitude to real conversation gives this play its texture but with less dramatic tension would just fall flat. Here it works brilliantly.

There's no set, no scene changes or changes in lighting or extra sound and no miming, so I would be curious to see how this is performed, that is how the actors orient their bodies to one another and the audience.

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## **Abbey says**

It's a play about the destruction of the planet and the destruction of a relationship. No set, no costume changes, no scenes or intermission and spans an entire life. Really amazing concept, twist in the end - want to see this on the stage.

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## **Jonathan says**

In a world where we are still dependent on fossil fuels, where each child born contributes 10,000 tonnes of CO2 to the atmosphere, how 'good' can our intentions be...? Much more than just eco-warrior propaganda, this intense, bare theatrical piece brims with raw emotion and confronting questions for our generation.

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## **Adrian says**

As a film it would be a flop, but in a small venue with two actors who had genuine chemistry it could be extremely touching, and inspire a lot of different emotions in the audience. The dialogue is hyper-real and each moment seems very personal. The structure of non-scenes is exciting - if I was directing I'd have a split-second blackout for each one, to allow the actors to take a different position but almost carry straight on, and probably (blasphemy!) a few props as well. Then when the non-scenes speed by at the end, it would almost be like flickering. Would be hard to pull off some of the changes but it would be a great technical challenge.

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## **Taylor Hudson says**

Beautiful and important. It's raw, painful, exhilarating, and extremely intimate. Scenes flow together uninterrupted, no set, no props, just a relationship and one question.

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## **Doug says**

Have not a clue why this is entitled 'Lungs' (except maybe vaguely, as it's primarily about a couple worrying about what 'carbon footprint' bringing a child into a world would leave, therefore I suppose the effect all that CO2 would have on breathing). It's an odd play to read, in that the playwright insists there be no set, props or miming, and no blackouts or lighting changes between scenes, so reading it, one has to make adjustments in one's own mind. The dialogue reads as hyper-realistic, meaning that people often don't finish thoughts, but barrel through and interrupt each other constantly, which CAN get to be a bit much. Regardless, a thoughtful and engaging play that could be quite devastating with brilliant actors in the two roles.

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## **Matt Greene says**

Amazing play. The most honest play I've ever read. Devastatingly beautiful.

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## **Victoria Claringbold says**

Dramatic writing doesn't get much better than this. An excellent two hander with charged emotional scenes and monologues great for actors in their late twenties to thirties.

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## **Max says**

I love the rhythm and looseness of this play, the work it makes you do even as it carries you along.

Sad and beautiful and funny. People, relationships, kids, life, it's all in there.

Will pick it up again from time to time, I'm sure.

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## **Holly says**

I have not seen this play yet, but would like to. The script asks for minimal lighting, no props, no miming, no set. Just a stage with two people, two lovers, who talk their way through their lives.

Reading the script is an experience in and of itself. It is every bit as minimalist as it asks the performed play to be, which makes for a really unique reading experience. There are no set directions or descriptions of what the actors might be saying or feeling. There are no divisions between scenes, but instead we are asked to make the cognitive leap when the content of the conversation switches. MacMillan also uses standalone commas to indicate pauses and backslashes to show the point at which the actor who is not currently speaking should interrupt the actor who is speaking. Those things combined with MacMillan's tendency to format his text more like poetry than prose makes for a really unique reading experience.

The content of the play is very contemporary. It is about relationships, bringing children into the world, and the environment. I think it might age quickly, but for now it's a beautiful look at how people who are currently in their 20s and 30s might approach having children, their romantic relationships, and their responsibility to the world around them.

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## **Adrian Collins says**

This play is insightful and thought-provoking. It dares you to consider answering questions you maybe never want to think about. The bareness of this concept lends itself to strong actors with a real sense of chemistry. This play is absolutely beautiful and delicate and as raw as the world we live in.

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**Georgiana P?un says**

Amazing

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**Christina Emmett says**

Having not seen the play, I found the text profoundly affecting. Raw and intimate, the razor-sharp dialogue quickly and economically builds the characters of 'W' and 'M', beginning at the point where they decide to start a family - going against their eco-warrior 'the world is grossly over-populated' principles. We span half a lifetime with them and it's frankly devastating. I imagine that audiences likely forgot to breathe during the more intense scenes. But you never lose hope for 'W' and 'M' as you continue to root for them throughout. The emotional impact of this text stayed with me past what is usual and I dearly wish I'd seen it performed.

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**Ioana says**

What a great play! Would you like to make a baby in this consumerism society, where everyone is apparently oblivious to the impact a person has on the environment? Well, our characters make compelling arguments and I must say the play is very well-written. I have seen it staged by an independent theatre and it blew my mind.

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