



**DRAMA FRAGILE AS 'GLASS':** (left to right) Carey Mulligan & Ben Rosenfield in Atlantic's stage adaptation of Ingmar Bergman's *Through a Glass Darkly*. Photo: Ari Mintz

*Theater Review*

# *Through a Glass Darkly:*

## **Fine acting in adaptation of Bergman film**



***THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY***

**Based on a film by Ingmar Bergman**

**Adapted for the stage by Jenny Worton**

**Directed by David Leveaux**

**Through July 3, 2011**

**Atlantic/New York Theatre Workshop**

**79 East 4th Street**

**(212-279-4200), [www.ticketcentral.com](http://www.ticketcentral.com)**

**By David NouNou**

“Torn between worlds,” as stated by Karin (Carey Mulligan), is the life she exists in since her release from an asylum after a nervous breakdown. There is the real world she lives in and the world that exists for her on the other side of the wall of the family summer house. The story takes place during a 24-hour period while four family members vacation on a remote island. The play opens in what appears to be an idyllic vacation being spent with her father David (Chris Sarandon), a writer who has constantly traveled and never been there for the family; her lonely, teenage brother, Max (Ben Rosenfield); and her adoring doctor husband, Martin (Jason Butler Horner).

Adapted from the 1961 Academy Award winning foreign film by Ingmar Bergman—what was once considered revolutionary film making—the play grapples with the usual Bergman themes of anxiety, grief, angst, forlornness, misery, death, but now just seems like mere melodrama and is dated. To add to Karin’s problem, she has to be all things to the men in her life since her mother’s death from the same disease. In today’s world, medication could certainly solve a lot of Karin’s anxiety-ridden problems and give her a sunnier disposition.

For not only is Karin “torn between worlds,” the men in her life are as well. Karin’s husband, Martin,

lives on a daily basis with her madness and the possibility of her getting better and them spending a happy life together. Her father, David, lives as a celebrated writer who is constantly touring and leaving the family behind to deal with their problems, and the other world of the tortured hack writer who can only write well at the expense of the misery and downfall of others, most notably his late wife. Finally there is her brother Max, who is extremely lonely, abandoned, and writes volumes out of frustration; and his other world, where his writing will be his salvation in getting noticed by his father.

Despite the story's shortcomings, the first-class performances make the show worth seeing. Carey Mulligan does an amazing job as Karin as she drifts between her real life and the world of her voices, as well as the juggling she has to do as daughter, sister and wife. Jason Butler Horner is superb as her protective husband, juggling patience, frustration and understanding. Ben Rosenfield, as the frustrated younger writer of the family, is heartbreaking as the lonely brother seeking his father's approval. Chris Sarandon hasn't quite mastered the necessary detachedness of the distant father and frustrated writer. As in his current Broadway revival of *Arcadia*, director David Leveaux keeps the action moving, but at a very sterile, antiseptic pace.

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