THE NEST is a modern translation by Conor McPherson of Franz Xaver Kroetz’s 1975 play of the same name. The play is co-produced by the Lyric and the Young Vic Theatre in London.

It is a three act play with no interval.

Translation: Conor McPherson

Director: Ian Rickson

Original score: Female composer and musician, PJ Harvey and performed by James Johnston

ACTORS:

Martha: Caoilfhionn Dunne

Kurt: Laurence Kinlan

Baby Stefan: A virtual baby

Set

Much of the action takes place in a flat which is open plan.

On the right is a darkened hall with a wooden front door and a step that leads into a small neat L shaped kitchen in pine. It has a wooden floor. There are fitted cupboards beneath a window where closed grey voile curtains allow light to shine in from outside. On the sill is a bottle of washing up liquid. The units contain a variety of items - tools, cleaning materials, and a bottle of whiskey. The bench tops are tidy, with some utensils on top. Beneath the stainless steel sink are cupboards with base boards that are stained with mould, as is the base of most of the furniture in the flat.

On the built-in cooker sits a shiny tea pot and saucepan. On the wall which corresponds to the short side of the L part of the kitchen is a microwave with units below, next to that is a tall fridge freezer, with a door matching the units.

In front of the units is a rectangular wooden table with two white chairs with a bar across the back, one tucked into the table facing us, while the other is tucked to the left of the table. Later the chairs will be used centre stage to suggest a café where Kurt and Martha meet. On the table is a laptop and a blue plastic folder with a list of names that Martha works through.

Next to the fridge is a gap which leads to the bathroom and the back door, out of which we can see climbing shrubs and bushes. The bathroom has a curved metal shower rail on which hangs a blue curtain, this doubles as a hospital unit later in the play. Also there is a slate menu with a chalked list of food which is hinged onto the shower cubical and unfolded later, when at the same time the chairs are used to suggest a café.

To the left of the bathroom is a high pine dresser with a mirrored cabinet containing medication and a shaving kit, the lower cupboard contains various things, the bottom is mouldy.

To the left of this is the bedroom area with a double doored pine wardrobe, also mouldy at the base. It contains clothes and accessories. A dark coloured sofa sits next to the wardrobe which converts to a double bed where Kurt and Martha sleep. After their son is born he will sleep beside the bed in a woven cradle with handles. On each side of the bed are two small bedside tables with matching lights with shades.

A television which sits in front of the bed-settee is suggested by flickering light and occasional sounds.

To the extreme left of stage is a set of tree trunks bordering a lakeside where Kurt and Martha spend time. The entire front of the stage consists of sloping rocks leading to the lake’s edge. When Kurt immerses himself in the water a black band of light suggests the depth he stands in.

The central part of the wooden floor of the flat cleverly conceals two flaps, which when pulled up and folded back, show an area of soil where plants grow. This area is the allotment that Kurt and Martha inherited from Kurt’s father.

The props are static throughout the play with illumination and sound focusing our attention on the action taking place.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERS

KURT, a lorry driver, is a man around 34 years old, about five foot eight. He has dark hair which is slightly wavy and cut short to expose his ears. His face is round and pleasant with twinkly eyes and dark eyebrows. His nose is straight. He has a dark moustache and a sparse beard. He has a wide smiley mouth with white straight teeth. He has a short neck, well developed physique, and a hairy chest. He has a slight paunch.

His normal garb is a red tea shirt with a logo on the left chest, a pair of jeans with a black belt and buckle, white or black socks, white or black boxers that he wears to bed, and black leather working shoes. He wears a black zippered fleece and a woollen beanie. He has protective gloves for working.

He wears a green polo shirt and jeans when out with Martha and the baby. Later he dons a black formal suit and pants with a white shirt and black tie to attend a meeting.

MARTHA is about 26 and is heavily pregnant when we first meet her. She works from home on her mobile doing market research. She is slightly shorter than Kurt and has a thin long face without makeup which can look very stern at times. Her straight brown hair is tied back in a ponytail. She has large dark eyes with nicely shaped eyebrows and a long straight nose. Her mouth is wide with sensuous lips above an elfin chin. Her neck is long and elegant.

When pregnant she wears a long maroon knitted cardigan with a matching belt tied across her middle. Underneath she wears a white tea shirt and on her legs a pair of three quarter length black leggings, and a pair of black flat fabric shoes with a little button on the side.

When her son is born her slim figure returns. She wears a checked white shirt with a tail that covers the back of her leggings, and she buys herself a sleeveless tight white top when going out with Kurt and Stefan to the lake. She wears a white tight sleeveless top to bed. When going out she wears a brown parka jacket with a hood. She carries Stefan in a papoose which is made of a checked blanket material and she carries a big shoulder bag with a black and white design. She sometimes wears denim leggings with a turn up.

STEFAN is the new born son of Kurt and Martha. He is a virtual baby whose presence is portrayed tenderly in mime.

Other characters in the play are mentioned in word only.