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Review: Boat People, at Pentameters Theatre

Topical play written by former lawyer features court drama after veteran sea captain's decision to rescue migrants

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IN the wonderfully offbeat hidden gem that is Pentameters Theatre, a performance feels like a mysterious present waiting to be unwrapped.

In *Boat People*, by new writer Emma Park, we meet Captain Papangelos, a Greek master of a cargo ship who has been sailing for over 30 years when he encounters a boatload of migrants in rough seas.

The court case stemming from his choice to take them on board his own ship is the setting for former lawyer Park's play, which explores highly topical moral and political questions: what are our responsibilities to others in need? And how much can they ask of us?

Giorgio Galassi gives an impassioned performance as the strongly moral Captain Papangelos. It would have been nice to see more development of the character of Miss Bradstock, played with zest by Christine Lohr.

The mystery of the fate of a certain migrant is also unravelled too quickly; more exploration of these factors would prolong the tension. At times it seemed that a desire to uphold the realities of the court setting impacted on theatrical effect; exemplified in the presence of two non-speaking characters.

The dilemma at the heart of the play is very thought-provoking and leaves even those who may have thought their moral position immutable at the play's start reconsidering the other side of the story, but there is still room to expand on the issues.

At present the play is still a raindrop that needs to grow into a wave, something this piece of writing would suggest Park is certainly capable of.