

The Drama House
Quality Film and TV Productions

Suffer The Little Children

Suffer The Little Children was written and produced by Jack Emery, directed by Betsan Morris Evans and starred Jane Horrocks as Deborah Hayes.

Deborah Hayes is charged with murdering her son Michael, aged 8 months. In the Police Interview Room, suffering from the immediate after-shock of the event, Deborah explains to two police officers (David Sumner and Steve Elder) and her solicitor (Lynne Farleigh) why she gave her suffering son her own sleeping tablets and then attempted suicide herself. Suffer The Little Children is a harrowing, deeply personal and true story.

The play achieved widespread critical acclaim. In seven out of ten British national daily newspapers it was 'Pick of the Day'. In all major British Sunday newspapers it was 'Pick of the Week'

Prix Europa 1994
Special Jury Prize

BAFTA 1994
Special Nomination For Best Single Drama

BANFF Television Festival 1995
Best Actress - Jane Horrocks
Best Short Drama (Nominated)

British Medical Association Film and Video Competition 1995
A Silver Award and The Bronze Award - Medicine in the Media

BRITISH PRESS REVIEWS

"It was undeniably harrowing. It is also, because of Miss Horrocks exquisite skill and tact as an actress, undeniably beautiful...it is a thrilling, heart-tearing performance, astonishing in its physical precision - the ball of the handkerchief scrubbing at tears - as in its' shape, leading to one true and terrible crescendo when she describes her suicide attempt. Jack Emery's script is admirable. So is the direction, by Betsan Morris Evans, sensitively judges in pace and manner. Not to be missed."

Clement Crisp - Financial Times

"Special pleading for Euthanasia? I don't think so. Emery was not making general recommendations on a complex issue but celebrating maternal wisdom and devotion in extremis. Deborah was convicted and given a year's probation. Maybe a trial was necessary; but it was, of course, a complete nonsense. There are some cases nobody can judge. As Emery and Horrocks movingly demonstrated, this was one."

Benedict Nightingale - The Times

"Virtuoso roles run the risk of drawing attention to their virtuosity. Horrocks was so still and settled in the character that she diverted you from marveling at her hour-long monologue to wonder at Deborah Hayes instead: a literally self-less performance. Hope passed like sunlight across her face, but Emery brooked no sentimentality ... Emery may have been trying to make a particular statement about the inhumanity of treating such mothers as common criminals, but he ended up in producing an uncommon picture of humanity."

Alison Pearson - Independent on Sunday

"Last night she [Jane Horrocks] took the starring role in SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN and you couldn't take your eyes off her, so brilliantly did she seize the opportunity. Her portrayal of Deborah Hays, a woman who pleaded guilty to manslaughter a few years ago - on grounds of diminished responsibility - after mercy-killing her disabled baby, was masterly."

The Daily Telegraph

"This is one of those dramas that ought to be seen, firstly for insights provided into the kind of tragic case it involves and secondly for Jane Horrocks' performance as Deborah, the young mother outwardly shattered by what has befallen her and her family."

Geoffrey Phillips - Evening Standard

"In SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN Jack Emery, writer of the memorable In My Defense starring Saskia Reeves, takes on another mercy-killing monologue. Jane Horrocks gives a strong performance as a mother who murders her baby son."

The Independent

"Ultimately unbearably moving, Suffer The Little Children was written with sympathy and understanding by Jack Emery, while Jane Horrocks was marvelous as the mother."

Margaret Forwood - Daily Express

"A minor Television Masterpiece."

The Daily Telegraph

"There was nowhere comfortable to sit during Suffer The Little Children, an extraordinary monologue written by Jack Emery. Once in a blue moon on television a dramatic performance is so electrifying that you can't stop thinking about it for days afterwards, and it's still remembered years later. I'm thinking of John Hurt in The Naked

Civil Servant, Derek Jacobi in *I, Claudius*, Bernarad Hill in *Boy From The Blackstuff*. And now there's Jane Horrocks in *Suffer The Little Children*, playing a mother whose children are born with Spinal Muscular Atrophy, a genetic disease which normally results in a slow and agonizing death within the first two years. Emery based the monologue, part of the 'Stages' season of plays written specifically for the television studio, on real case studies. His script was flawless, but it was Horrocks as the fictitious Deborah Hays, explaining to police officers why she mercy-killed her second son, baby Michael, who turned it into the poignant and harrowing piece of drama I've seen for years." **Brian Viner Mail on Sunday**