



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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AWAY

University of Adelaide Theatre Guild

Little Theatre

Until 18 May 2013

Review by Brian Godfrey

Michael Gow's "Away" is probably an Australian classic and is high up on secondary schools' reading lists. This is most likely due to the fact that it is not just a well-written play, but a very precise insight into Australian family life of the late sixties. It deals with many human issues which are common throughout history, and are still with us today – as demonstrated in this production by the clever multimedia of Ryan Merrett – as well as looking at the many connotations of the word 'away': going away on holidays, passing away, going away to war, having it away, doing away with oneself, and even being away with the fairies.

Aldo Longobardi's student production is blocked for the semi-round Little Theatre well, looks good in Richard Parkhill's trademark appropriate and unobtrusive lighting, with some nice little humorous touches such as campers accosting the audience pre-show with their latest grievances, and the same actors (Fiona Fraser, Imogen Chloe Hawkes, Sarah Jenkin-Hall, Danielle Macolino, Tessa Price-Brooks, Kate Van Der Horst and Maxim Bevan) playing stage furniture, pictures on walls and reflections.

But the emotions required by the characters to have the audience empathise with them seem to be missing. The actors 'emote' and act their roles, but where is the connection to us? This is a fault in the direction and not the acting. Longobardi has paced the show well but there are times when a pause, a look or stillness can add the tension required.

That being said the overall quality of cast performances range from good to very good. Standouts are Ben Todd as the put upon quiet 'little' husband, who is certainly the comic relief of Act One, but has the title taken away (pun not intended) from him by a Hula skirted, Elvis-impersonating Robert Bell in Act Two – Bell also impresses in the sensitivity stakes as newly-wed tradie Rick who may have married to compensate for losing his mates to National Service; Joshua Coldwell as the stoic, practical headmaster who cannot understand his wife's depression (beautifully understated by Sophia Dooley) brought on by losing their son to the Vietnam War; and Kelly Mildenhall as the very 'strine 60s housewife from Hell – but she could vary her shrillness from time to time.

Alex Daly does well as terminally ill schoolboy Tom and once his English accent settled in, was even better: his determination and frustration to do 'it' before his death, and Bell's self-doubt were both at the correct emotional depth required for the rest of the production. As Meg, Karen Burns gives a competent performance, but needs to watch her projection – she was too quite for the most part.

Although this trip 'away' is not totally fulfilling, it is still worth a car trip to Adelaide.