

Short and Sweet top 110: NIDA week 2

Written by Suzi Mackay



Top 110 NIDA Week 2
Parade Theatre, NIDA (Sydney)
15 – 19 February

The Parade Theatres are bigger and more tech intensive than the Newtown Theatre and this made for an interesting comparison....here goes, S&S NIDA week2.

Frankenstein is a much-heard story. It started as a book and has been brought to stage and screen (both big and small) many times. This ten minute piece concerned a fathers desire to keep the soul of his family alive – even after he had destroyed their bodies. It is an interesting take on the theme with some sharp technical cues and solid performances but suffered from the constant scene changes that can only be sustained in a full length theatre show. **3 stars**

Rules is Rules plays with themes of loyalty and ethics in situations that aren't particularly ethical. After an uneven start the performers found a great rhythm and energy in the piece and with a killer twist at the end – satisfying closure. **3 and 1/2 stars**

Sandstone is as beautiful as it is earnest. The concept of a white man desiring to connect with the indigenous Australians is interesting and thoughtful. However, the dialogue seemed at times a little stilted and the flow of the piece a little sporadic. It did contain some poignant moments and some beautiful images. **3 and 1/2 stars**

Mother takes the idea of family and twists and turns it delightfully. Just when you think you know where these people are at, another motivation appears. It is an engaging play due in great part to the performance of Tina Bursill as Anna, the adoptive mother of Haven Tso's William. Sharply written by Tso, it could have done without the detail of set and props in order to highlight the themes even further. **4 stars.**

50 Guns is sharp and powerful. Well written and staged it brings to life the statistics one hears about the awful gun death tally all around the world. There is one gun and one story that has particular meaning to the performer and she takes the audience to it before the powerful ending. Perhaps it could have been performed with a greater variety of emotions in order to take us on more of a journey through the subtle sentiments that go into each life. But I am nitpicking; it was surely sharp and powerful. **4 and 1/2 stars.**

Our Best Candidate is another sharp funny piece about how just one little AVO can wreck a perfectly good career. Well written and performed it could be done with a little more variation to ensure it finds all its humor. **4 stars.**

The Joy of Solitude is very funny and very well performed. A little bit of a puzzle, the audience mentally tries to find the young man a way out of his dilemma while the old mans presence reminds us we can't. It is delightfully performed by the young Charlie (Brennon Muhoberec) and the old Charlie (Chris Lewis). **4 stars.**

Reaction is beautifully written, performed and directed. The stage was kept simple – a breath of fresh air after so many set heavy pieces – and this allowed the simple subtle relationships to develop. A couple meets, fall in love and set up house. They have a child and expect to live an ordinary life. Only, he happens to work in a nuclear plant, in Eastern Europe and works the night shift on 26 April 1986. This disaster unfolds through the eyes of the couple. Tom Pelik and Amelia Tranter worked so well together on stage it had such a feeling of reality and added a great poignancy to the piece. **4 and ½ stars.**

Jasmine Walker is a one-woman monologue about life, love, bonding and a sad and terrible luck. Well performed by Ro Dempsey who also wrote the piece, it could have done with another outside eye as the beautifully structured images were played at too same a level. We knew too early of the tragedy to come but, even so, the image of a sad saxophone as an ominous call from the future is an engaging metaphor to draw from. **3 and ½ stars.**

Charming is, well, charming. It twists and turns away from the usual fractured fairy tales and is funny and well timed. Alison Noble and Alex Packard were simply great as the sleeping Princess and Prince Charming, both witty and endearing. **4 stars.**

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