

Observer

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Reviews by Cheryl Threadgold

■ **Fourth Wall Theatre Company** treated Melbourne audiences to intense, thought-provoking theatre in a double bill of Australian plays at **St Martins Theatre, South Yarra**.

Inspired by true stories, the first play *What is the Matter with Mary Jane?* written as a monologue by **Wendy Harmer** and **Sancia Robinson**, follows **Sancia's** story about her life-threatening eating disorder.

Director **Natasha Boyd's** interpretative script adaptation introduced three females and one male to depict **Sancia**, her controlling, negative inner voices and others, individually and unified. This treatment enhanced audience interest and emphasised non-gender specific vulnerability to eating disorders.

Casey Bohan, Jen Bush,

Samuel Howard and **Isabella Perversi** delivered expressive, articulate performances, using a gamut of emotions to skilfully immerse their audience in this torrid story.

Boyd's direction ensured sustained pace and visual interest, with the centre-stage scales and toilet a

stark reminder of this mental health disorder's cause and effect.

After interval, **Patricia Cornelius's** poetically rhythmic, feminist drama *Slut* commenced with emergency vehicle sirens.

Schoolgirls chant that a man is dead. He was "a good man", a hero killed trying to save "a party girl stripper", who we learn is their childhood friend **Lolita**.

Slut tells of **Lolita's** sad life trajectory from happy, top-grade student to tragic downfall.

The fickle, mercurial gossip of 'friends' sees **Lolita** revered, envied and loathed as her life spirals uncontrollably from sexual objectification, abuse and violence.

Julia Lambert, Malaynee Hayden, Casey Bohan and **Jen Bush** presented articulate, high-energy performances under **Natasha**

Boyd's skilled, sensitive direction.

Reschelle O'Connor created compelling and memorable theatre with her outstanding portrayal of **Lolita**, who desperately craved friendship, love, loyalty and respect.

Natasha Boyd and **Chris Collins's** effective sound design atmospherically complemented the script.

Fourth Wall Theatre Company is fast establishing a strong presence in Melbourne's theatre scene, thanks to its competent, passionate co-founders **Natasha Boyd** (Artistic Director) and **Susie Sparkes** (Company Director) and team.

Their next show is *Wicked Sisters* at **St Martins Theatre** in November.

www.fourthwalltheatre.com.au

- Cheryl Threadgold

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