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SLUT & WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH MARY JANE?

May 12, 2021 | Independent Theatre, Reviews | 0

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*****STARS

By George Dixon

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Fourth Wall Theatre Co, a new company that began in February 2020, but because of COVID, placed their plans on hold until 2021.

Their inaugural indoor performance is an outstanding double-bill treat. All of the performers who were initially cast came together and hit a home run.

Fourth Wall intends to share Australian productions while presenting “topics that matter”, along with the ability to create conversation afterwards.

“Slut” and “What is the matter with Mary Jane?” certainly ticks all the boxes.

The audience was spellbound, entertained and appreciative, which generated small groups of people engaging in discussions at the interval and after the performances – St Martins is an ideal venue that lends itself to after-show casual drinks.

The first production was ***“What is the matter with Mary Jane?”*** written by **Wendy Harmer** (Author, humorist, TV host and ABC Radio Broadcaster) and **Sancia Robinson** (Author, Performer Sydney and Melbourne Theatre Companies, Casting Producer and Teacher)

The play presents an insight into the life and day to day hurdles of *“Mary Jane”* played by **Cassy Bohan**. The insights come from **Robinson’s** experience with Anorexia and Bulimia Nervosa. The script presents a genuine opportunity to understand that it’s more than body image or a mental health issue. This dark subject is peppered with aspects of humour, which can surprise you. For instance, at one stage, one of her voices suggests *“that even in fairy tales, the apples are poisonous”*.

The play is well-paced, with excellent direction, an ensemble of four characters; **Cassy Bohan** (*Mary Jane*) and three others, **Jen Bush**, **Samuel Howard** and **Isabella Perversi**. The scripting allows us to see and experience the various aspects of Anorexia from both genders. Plus, the mindset and reasoning that spurs on the condition, the negative thinking associated with seemingly innocent comments or compliments, from both well-wishers, professionals, and TV commercials. Aspects that miss our radar yet hones in on their wavelength.

The issue of Bulimia Nervosa was very skilfully handled. A comedy TV segment, which takes the audience along the journey, and the mouse wheel trap that develops, is very insightful. Even though this is an "In the mirror" production, it's a subject that should not be kept in the dark.

The play presents the issue from an insiders perspective. I'm sure, for de-mystifying general perceptions; to help others going through this (they are not alone); to provide hope and light and to raise the conscious through awareness and open discussion.

If someone you know needs help with an eating disorder, please contact the appropriate counselling services.



The second production was **Slut**.

This powerful, award-winning play receiving 15 awards on the 2018 Victorian OAP festival circuit is a well suited and timely addition to the programme.

An excellent production, demonstrating that "less is more". A single graffiti backdrop and five strategically placed boxes.

Based on an actual event in Melbourne that resulted in the untimely death of a "Party Girl."

Slut, written by Patricia Cornelius, takes us through the short life of *Lolita*, played by **Reschelle O'Connor**, through the eyes of four of her childhood friends, played by **Cassy Bohan, Jen Bush, Malaynee Hayden** and **Julia Lambert**.

The acting, direction and mannerisms of young schoolgirls were down to a tee. With hair twirling, skirts flicking and close head contact, it brought back images of junior schoolyard and classroom antics. It was a delight to experience the visuals of each member.

Lolita has very little dialogue. She speaks about how she loved her bike -the rush of the wind in her face, the excitement of speed, the fear of falling off, and the admiration received from others when she waves to them. All of that at the age of twelve.

The story is reflective, capturing aspects of childhood relationships, hero-worship, resentment and at times jealousy, every girl wanted to be Lolita, and every boy wanted to know Lolita.

The changes are well scripted and easy to follow; with adolescence and puberty comes the shift in

innocence, over-sexualisation, peer pressure, toxic gossip and slut-shaming, are highlighted. For Lolita, the spiral continues into domestic violence, yet all the time, she is silent.

If you are experiencing family, sexual or domestic violence or know someone who is, please contact the appropriate counselling services.

Both productions stand strong in presenting issues that need to be highlighted. While the topics are dark, the presentations are not. They do provide talking points, which is part of their purpose.

Hats off to Fourth Wall Theatre Co, their cast and crew in their inaugural indoor production.

“Slut” and “What is the matter with Mary Jane?”

6 – 15 May

St Martins Theatre

28 St Martins Ln, South Yarra

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