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Songs of Grace and Redemption

TAP GALLERY THEATRE: 'Songs of Grace and Redemption' offers a very entertaining and ultimately moving story of how peoples' paths can intersect by fate, with variable results.



Five strangers and their respective mountains of emotional baggage walk into a bar. Sound like a cliché? Perhaps, but *Songs of Grace and Redemption*, written by John Donnelly (*Bone*, *Poll Tax Riots*) and presented by Devil May Care offers a very entertaining and ultimately moving story of how peoples' paths can intersect by fate, with variable results. Devil May Care, founded in 2009 by Claire Nesbitt-Hawes and Sasha Misrachi, seeks to "create dynamic and provocative performances... through cutting edge contemporary theatre". This production, directed by Danielle O'Keefe, succeeds in being both humorous and thought-provoking, offering a gritty view of human relationships and exposing the characters' weaknesses and ultimate need to be loved. This conception is effectively supported by Margaret McDonald's realistic set & costume design and Shaun Davies' lighting which often gave emotional insights into the dramatic context. Simon Moy's sound design also succeeded in sustaining or changing moods especially during the many scene changes. Each of the six main characters face major issues within, and eventually between themselves, in a 90-minute unraveling of relationships which is mostly comic but not without its dark twists, adding several layers to this cleverly written text. The performances by the cast are mostly strong, highlighted by Louise Pronk, who plays Soley, an attractive Icelandic girl at whose bar most of the story takes place. Pronk gives suitable physical and emotional coldness to her troubled character, but offers glimpses of Soley's emotional depth during her occasional philosophising and telling of her dark past. Andy Leonard and Jacqui Livingston play John and Nicola, a couple with sexual problems and professional complexes, and despite brief hints of hope for both, things end up unexpectedly. Both are challenging roles containing several one-on-one scenes in which their chemistry was not always engrossing but their excellent delivery of the text managed to sustain interest in what was happening. Clayton Moss as Steve, a self-conscious loner with much to hide, and Kathryn Schuback as his disabled sister Sarah, provide a very touching final scene which hints at the grace and redemption from the work's title. The oddest character of all is perhaps Peter, played by Nathaniel Schochter as an unstable young man (not quite in his 30s as mentioned in the promotional material) plagued by relationship trouble and at the crux of the plot's ultimate unraveling. Greatly recommended for its humour and tender message on human relationships, *Songs of Grace and Redemption* presented by Devil May Care TAP Gallery Theatre, 278 Palmer Street, Darlinghurst Season: 2 - 20 November, Tues-Sat 8pm, Sun 5pm Season closed

PAULO MONTOYA

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paulo Montoya is an opera lover from Sydney. He is 25 years old and recently won the Pacific Opera Young Critics Award for his review of their production of Hansel and Gretel.



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