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Short & Sweet Seymour Centre Week 1

Seymour Centre, Sydney; Short & Sweet
Wednesday, January 21, 2009. Opening Night Performance. Review by **MAZ DIXON**.

Until January 24. Bookings: (02) 8507 3034.

Space Travel Unlimited

This play was written by Short & Sweet's oldest contestant, Julia Britton (a spry 94 year old). A conductor and a music student are surprised to find themselves suddenly dead and offered any kind of afterlife they like. Considering that Jessica Saras, as the Student, was a late replacement (less than 24 hours before this performance), cast and director do an admirable job.

Legacy

For me this was one of the highlights, blending as it does gallows humour with astute observations about human selfishness and mortality. The Reverend, ministering to a woman on death row, finds himself unable to have her worry about giving her victim's family closure; she's more worried about having her last words recorded for posterity. Top performances from Ali Aitken, and Philip McDonald, while Ron Hadley is terrific as various executees delivering their own legacy. Great script from Chris Shaw Swanson and ably directed by Larry Kelly.

The Lamentable Facts of the Horrible Case of the Man Who Read Too Much Poe
Arthur (Maurizio Degliesposti) feels victimised by his landlady (Sarah Herlihy) and her tabby Muffin, who apparently symbolise the banality of evil. Arthur comes up with a suitably Poe-etic (yes, I know it's a terrible pun) fate for her. Both actors are great, and Degliesposti even looks a little like Poe. However, the script, which starts promisingly, peters out to a predictable ending. Writer Scott McAteer should perhaps read a little more Poe.

Almost Boiling

A mother and daughter tussle over the best way to deal with Mum's terminal illness. Aishveryaa Nidhi and Cheryl Khurana build up a nice rapport in a short time, but the writing is a tad stilted and could be a little more dynamic.

Birdmonster

Three Mums discuss their marriages while watching the kiddies tumble about the playground. Much of the conversation involves observations about a husband's shortcomings being interrupted with urgent instructions to the kids to play nice. One of the kids is called Willy, so you get the idea. Deborah Peebles, Ro Dempsey and Helen Atkinson do well with the rapid-fire patter, but it's unfortunate that all the double entendres are so predictable.

Word Space

I found this piece frustrating just for the lost opportunities that could have made it really, really good. A couple of guys are getting ready to graffiti the Opera House with an anti-war slogan, only to be distracted by the cops. Danny Rey-Conde and Sergei Kozul are fine, but could amp it up a little. It's hard to believe that someone is freaking out about heights, and police dogs, and being shot in the head, when it's delivered in the style of someone having an argument at a dinner party. Writer Elizabeth Bennet touches on some interesting ideas but doesn't go anywhere with them. For instance, there is passing reference to one of the characters being so pedantic that he does a spray can spell-check on other artist's work – following that up a little could have been fun. The staging was pretty good, though.

The Prison of the Testicle

Clayton Moss and Jessica Holburn show themselves to be pretty good character actors in this piece about a bickering New York couple. Dan Balcaban's directing is good, the set evokes a tatty lounge room with just a few pieces of furniture. Nevertheless, once it was over I found myself asking "...what was that all about?"

Her Lover

This tale of imaginary love is nicely performed by Kath Perry and Richard Mason. Peter Shelley's script, based on a short story by Gorky, tells the tale of a civil servant who bilks his landlady out of rent money by writing fake love letters. Fun and a little poignant, but the punch line is a bit of a letdown.

The Fruit Bats of Charters Towers

The story of an eccentric little old lady who is forced out of her home by the council, concerned as it is about the 1800 fruit bats in her backyard. Lovely performances by Christine Greenough and Steve Hopely, but I did find myself sympathising with the council. I mean, fruit-bat eccentricity is fine as long as you don't have to live next door to it.

North

Two horrible yuppies get caught in the middle of nowhere while foraging for lemon-myrtle infused olive oil. Marcello Fabrizi's script crackles along. Both he and Jess Macaulay give performances as awful, awful people who aren't completely alienating. Very amusing.

Gods and Zombies

This one's my pick for the night. Tom O'Sullivan and Fayssal Bazzi have been trapped in a house for three months, thanks to the zombies camped outside. They spend their time discussing whether the emergence of the zombies is caused by biology or God, then try to think of a way out that involves being dead before the zombies break in. Great performances, great script by Sam O'Sullivan, lots of laughs.

The Goat or What the Fuck?

So this guy wakes up and discovers that the hot chick he's been shagging is only six years old. And she has a hobby involving a goat, a video camera and a website. I'm sure this is supposed to be a satirical critique of...something...but dude? No. Just...no.

