

Scenstr. Review

Lysa and The Freeborn Dames

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'Lysa And The Freeborn Dames' is a wild and fun explosion of female empowerment that also doesn't shy away from getting deep when it feels it should.

Featuring a gorgeous cast where each member brings something great to the stage, 'Lysa' sees events unfold in a small, backward town post anti-Trump Women's Marches where a woman decides to take a stand herself, but is met with criticism along the way.

Peta (Clementine Anderson), Myra (Samantha Lush) and Esme (Tatum Mottin) join Lysa (Tania Vukicevic) in her attempt to make a change as she figures out a way to bring the town's attention to its mistreatment and degradation of women, locking themselves in the local pub.

Throughout the show there is low, chanting commentary made by three cast members on the outside of the set who also each have a touching individual monologue that they stand in the centre of the space to deliver. They are Barbara Lowing, Roxanne McDonald and Hsiao-Ling Tang: Three women older than the rest of the cast who share insights into the history of women's rights over the years. Although the bulk of the story takes place in the setting of the pub, the addition of these 'dames' around the outside is a welcome one.

They bring a further sense of expression to 'Lysa' and give it a new element that encourages the audience to see beyond just what is unravelling on the stage in front of them.

Hugh Parker plays the part of misunderstood father to Lysa perfectly. It's frustrating to see the way he speaks to his daughter simply because he's not used to females taking as strong a stand as her against misogyny. There's a message in his performance alone: Don't be afraid of change.

The issue of toxic masculinity and peer pressure is also explored as Ken (Morgan Francis) battles to break free from the actions and attitudes of his sports team in fear of rejection. There's violence, abuse, shame and passion all thrown in to make this show not only engaging from the first until the last second, but also meaningful and truly powerful.

Jackson Bannister is genuinely terrifying as Grant. His booming voice and the way he moves around the space is scary, but it's real. This performance has no interest in toning anything down whatsoever, which is good.

Tania Vukicevic and Clementine Anderson provide the more serious and stirring side of this story while Samantha Lush and Tatum Mottin deliver much of the comic relief. The writing here (props to the wonderful Claire Christian) is genius.

Direction by Sanja Simic is also absolutely worth mentioning... The blocking is marvellous

and the cast make effective use of the small, square space they inhabit for a majority of the show.

'Lysa And The Freeborn Dames' is unafraid to tell you things you're not comfortable hearing but it does so in a way that is absolutely admirable. The creatives have crafted an important performance... One that is angry where it has a right to be and informative where it needs to be.

★★★★★