



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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PAROXYSM TAKES ON ALL COMERS

Paroxysm Press

Tuxedo Cat – Raj House

Until 9 Mar 2014

Review by Benjamin Orchard

For this year's Fringe, independent publishing house Paroxysm Press is presenting a series of poetry recitals, featuring both their published alumni and some special guests from interstate. Each night will feature a different line-up of wordsmiths, and a different thematic focus. This makes it a very difficult show to review, as my experience of the first night will not necessarily be indicative of the quality of work to follow.

The first night opened with a "60 second slam", in which members of the audience were invited to share their work, for the chance of winning \$100 cash. Mike Hopkins won for his cheekily self-effacing piece, "Everybody Hates Poets" and budding teen poet, Roisin Murphy-Haines received the runner up prize (a bundle of Paroxysm's published product) for her precociously eloquent work, "Hands". This was followed by Tasmania-based poet, Luke Whitby, reciting some of his "greatest hits", and a "cross-border slam" in which a trio of poets from Victoria (Loran Steinberg, Steve Smart & George O'Hara) faced off against another team from SA (Nicki Bullock, Tracy Korsten & Royce Kurmelovs). The Paroxysm editors seated on the judging panel determined Smart to be the "individual winner" and SA to be the "team winner".

I am really not an expert on poetry and rarely read it for pleasure. Personally, I found the poems on offer to be all over the place in terms of quality, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous and everything in between. Not only the quality of the material, but the quality of the performances were wildly uneven, for every heartfelt and confident recital, there was another that seemed coldly detached or faltering in the delivery. Whenever a new act came onstage it really did feel like a "lucky dip". With the stunning exception of Hopkins and Murphy-Haines (both of whom I felt gave more impressive performances than any of the headliners), I thought the 60 second slam contributions were pretentious dross. Whitby was an affable stage presence delivering some humorously surreal poems. Team Victoria had some impressive poems on paper, but Steinberg let the team down by phoning in her performance and several times had to be reminded to come away from the bar because she should be onstage. I felt Bullock and Korsten were hamming it up in order to inject some life into sub-par material, with Kurmelovs largely carrying Team SA with his impassioned delivery of some winningly quirky material. But what the hell do I know? The level of applause was fairly consistent for each individual performer, and at the end of the night, Team SA were proclaimed the "people's choice" winners.

The 2nd of March presents a "Best Of The Best" selection, as chosen by Paroxysm's editors. Whitby makes an encore appearance alongside Scott Sneddon, Ian Gibbins and Indigo, who will all be delivering extended poetry readings. The evening will conclude with the presentation of an independent short film, "The Ted Bundi Birthday Barbi", by Dick Dale.

On the 9th of March, Paroxysm is presenting a combination of poetry recitals, stand up and open-mike that promises to push the boundaries of good taste, and for that reason will be put on a little later at night than the previous two performances.

Again, it is difficult to assign a rating or a recommendation based only on what I saw of the first night, which doesn't seem like a very clear indicator as to the quality or style of things to come. I guess the



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Paroxysm showcases would serve as a good gateway experience for those looking to get a broad sampling of what the Adelaide poetry scene has to offer, and are willing to take some bad with the good.

Rating: 2.5 starts (out of 5)