



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

[www.theatreguide.com.au](http://www.theatreguide.com.au)

Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738  
MODBURY SA 5092

info@theatreguide.com.au  
ABN : 93 297 960 525

---

## SONGS OF STAGE AND SCREEN

### Promise Adelaide

Burnside Ballroom

Until 1 October 2014

Review by Anthony Vawser

When is an evening's entertainment more than just an evening's entertainment? When the proceeds generated by admission, food and raffle sales will be used towards further research into one of the most common killers in today's society - and when the entertainment in question is creating an invaluable opportunity for aspiring young performers to test their feet (and/or voices) in front of an audience.

The repertoire was excellently varied (both classic and modern, with many songs now known for both stage and screen uses), and highlights of the night were at a level of quality to be truly proud of. "Moses Supposes", immortalised by the incomparable hoofers Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor, is given the best of all possible tributes by the multi-talented Douglas Wiseman and Benji Riggs, while the entire male contingent of the evening makes "Seize the Day" (from Newsies) into another dance-based winner.

"Two Hands, One Heart" (pairing the night's young director Ben Francis with Georgia Broomhall) is a spine-tingling stunner. The two performers impressively find the combination of strength and delicacy that this particular duet requires. Tahlia Fantone makes "On My Own" seem like the song she was born to sing, using her powerfully expressive face to capture our heart, and then negotiating the emotional nuances in her vocals with breathtaking skill.

"Don't Cry for Me Argentina" is given a remarkably accomplished interpretation by the evening's 16-year-old musical director Serena Martino-Williams. Her poise, control and maturity would surely be the envy of women twice her age. Emily Goldsmith's "Once More I Can See" displayed a performer with a strong grasp of emotional effects, while a most unusual triumph was "I Love You" from "Spelling Bee", sharply performed as a trio presentation. Its idiosyncrasies worked in its favour, resulting in perhaps the most unexpectedly moving moment of the evening. Lachlan Williams' segments showcased a keen comic talent, while with "Luck Be a Lady", Benji Riggs demonstrated to everyone present just what it means to be a professional-standard performer, completely at home on the stage - and clearly relishing his time there.

In the face of such a remarkable achievement of organisation from 15-year-old Ben Francis (not to mention that same young man's exceptional performing talent), staging an event with plainly commendable intentions and the spirit of education, altruism and awareness behind it, whatever criticism - however constructive - that a reviewer may have to offer of the individual presentations of the youngsters involved cannot help but feel somewhat churlish, even irrelevant. There were moments, however, when the performers' relative lack of experience was reflected, or when the pairing of singer with song didn't quite mesh for this reviewer.

Leah Harford's "Gimme Gimme" felt like it was reaching for a level of maturity that the singer was not yet emotionally ready to capture, despite the technical quality of her voice, while Maddy Grey had the unenviable - and perhaps impossible - task of making one of the most famous songs in history - "Over the Rainbow" - seem fresh and interesting. The two singers felt much more comfortable applying their talents to a truly touching and lovely duet performance of "For Good". Onor Nottle delivers "Tomorrow" from "Annie" with an impressive Brooklyn accent and some strong, distinctive phrasing, but was either



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

[www.theatreguide.com.au](http://www.theatreguide.com.au)

Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738  
MODBURY SA 5092

[info@theatreguide.com.au](mailto:info@theatreguide.com.au)  
ABN : 93 297 960 525

---

unable or unwilling to build the song to a confident climax, substituting a vulnerability that didn't quite ring true.

"Giants in the Sky", meanwhile, seemed *too* idiosyncratic a choice of song to really catch fire out of context, and Aladdin's "A Whole New World", though competently sung, came off feeling musically limp and uninspired, particularly when compared with the smart humour and freshness of "Pulled" from "The Addams Family Musical", performed very engagingly and amusingly by Hannah Hamilton (in character as Wednesday). Camryn Jordans demonstrated (in two numbers) both an impressively powerful voice and the type of refreshing comic persona reminiscent of old-time 'comediennes', but would be advised to remember that a little of her verve and energy has the potential to go a long way.

The bottom line: this was an evening of good vibes and strong optimism overcoming the sadness of statistics, with the bravery and insight offered by guest speaker Jenni Eyles putting a human face to the fight against breast cancer. It was also a generally delightful display of youthful talent, some of it remarkably mature, assured and professional, others showing promise of achieving excellence in the future, given the right material to showcase their individual strengths. It was, ultimately, an event that intended to sharpen an audience's compassion and galvanise their resolve to contribute whatever they were able toward a worthy cause. One sincerely hopes that this was achieved.