



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ATLANTA

Bakehouse Theatre Company

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 21 October

Review by Maggie Wood

"Atlanta" is a play about friendship, its nuances, its perspectives and the legacies it leaves behind. Written by Joanna Murray-Smith it is an Australian play containing Australian experiences, both of the present and of the past.

The Atlanta of the title is trying to work out what life is about. How can she reconcile the horrific past her mother survived with the remoteness from that same horror – both in time and distance – which her friends enjoy.

She is a bridge to that past, and feeling the weight of the responsibility.

Karen Burns plays Atlanta, alternating between being involved with the action and breaking the fourth wall to expose information and converse with the audience. Burns manages the twists and turns of the script well and delivers a confused, fragile, yet ultimately strong Atlanta.

Her quintet of friends -Stephanie Clapp as Grace, Adam Carter as Alex, Jack Evans as Gabe and standout performances from Patrick Clements as Jack and Clare Mansfield as Jess – circle around Atlanta like satellites. They think they know her, but do they really?

Together they navigate the journey to adulthood and try to work out what life is all about.

Joh Hartog's direction makes good use of the simple stage; however, with the performances there was an abundance of 'more drama' meaning 'more volume' from the actors, with the resulting loss of diction making some key lines difficult to decipher.

As each character took to the front of the stage to address the audience, only a couple of the obviously more experienced actors raised their eyes to connect with attendees sitting beyond the first two rows in the heavily-raked stalls. When they did, it vastly improved the experience.

Atlanta explores the not-knowingness of youth, a point which we now call the 'quarter life crisis'. It is at that point where naive optimism can crumble to doubt, and life's twists and turns can make 'ordinary' seem to be either supremely special, or a life sentence.