



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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## BLINKY BILL

**Hills Youth Theatre**

**Stirling Community Theatre**

Until 2 July 2017

Review by Talia Gaertner-Jones

Hills Youth Theatre brings Blinky Bill to life in an Australian Premiere written by Hills Youth ex-student/tutor Josh Sanders.

Sanders' script draws on the books by the same name from author Dorothy Wall and follows Blinky (Toby Vincent) and his friends Nutsy (Loren Tansell), Splodge Kangaroo (William Bowman), Flap Platypus (Francis Healy) and Lizzie Lizard (Claire Grosser) while they try to stay out of mischief and save the bush from those pesky humans Bob (Charlotte Sarre) and John (Jaymee Huppertz). Amongst the hilarity and mischief that ensues, the story does touch on some grown-up themes and parents should know that children may find the end of Act 1 upsetting. But at the heart of the story there is a strong message of love, friendship, family and of course the environment.

Toby Vincent has big shoes to fill playing the title role of Blinky Bill. Many Australians have childhood memories of Blinky, either from the books, or like me, the television show, where I can still remember all the lyrics to the opening song! And Vincent does Blinky justice, with a brilliant portrayal of this loveable yet cheeky koala. His youthful energy and excitement shines through while also being able to pull at the heart strings at more challenging times. And in his song 'Beating Around The Bush' he kept that enthusiasm going with a singing voice to match.

Blinky's sidekicks, Loren Tansell as Nutsy was strong and outgoing, William Bowman played a faithful and sometimes timid Splodge and Francis Healy was loyal yet dopey Flap. Claire Grosser was fashionable and confident as Lizzie Lizard and Alycia Van Wegen was a brainy, do-gooder as Marcie Bilby. James Grosser and Sophie Zodrow have emotionally challenging roles as Mr and Mrs Koala but take it in their stride and are two of the favourites in the cast. A mention also must go to Hugh Bellette-Jay as Jacko Snr, with his radio ad persona and Peter Moore as Jacko Jnr who develops his sound just at the right moment!

The set for the show is a perfect bush backdrop and the opening scene with sounds of animals and bush waking up, along with puppeteers moving snakes and birds and a magnificent green frog across the stage transported the audience straight to the outback. With minimal set changes, the lighting was moved and changed to take us to different locations and times of day. Director Di Mason along with choreographers Chloe Zodrow, Jessica Corrie have created movement that fits perfectly for such a large cast and Sonja Zodrow as Assistant Director and Music Director had her work cut out for her with original and tricky songs for so many children to learn, but they succeeded brilliantly in their execution. Costumes were creative and colourful, each displaying the characteristics of the group of animals they represented. Blinky was dressed in his traditional red overalls. The dingos looked smart in their vests and hats and the pelicans in their top hats and tails appeared very proper.

Josh Sanders is to be congratulated for doing an incredible job in writing such a complex script for so many performers and the Hills Youth Theatre can be extremely proud of the show they are presenting.