



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ENCOUNTERS

Vintage Theatre Co-op

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 11 Mar 2017

Review by Linda Edwards

"Encounters" is a collection of sketches based on various types of meetings between older people and others, interspersed with songs performed by the a capella group the "In-betweens". According to Artistic Director Alan Hendry, the main aims of the project are to provide opportunities for older people to participate in theatre, to promote positive, active ageing, to raise awareness of the issues surrounding older people, and of course, to entertain. All the actors have participated in the theatre workshop, "Don't Act Your Age" and are aged 70 or above.

Of the sketches, the most entertaining are "Ash for Cash" with Alice Richardson and Cynthia Lear, and "Let's be Bold", with Rose Johnson and Charles McNulty, both of which challenge stereotypes of older people as passive, stupid, frail, or needy. In both, the protagonists are intelligent and funny and put their own twist on the system to suit their own ends. "Finding a Voice", with Flo Hemmings, is a touching vignette about a homeless elderly woman, and "Drawn In" is a well-acted mini with Liz Windsor, that revolves around a woman battling inner voices as she tries to cope with the changes ageing brings.

The songs include Schubert's "Der Leiermann" (about an elderly organ grinder), "Sweet Sweet Spirit" and "Walking on Sunshine" and are a welcome addition to the programme.

"Encounters" succeeds in its aims of entertaining, and giving the participants opportunities to perform, but as Angela Lansbury and James Earl Jones showed us in 2013 in "Driving Miss Daisy", older people can do just about anything, and this show is less successful that it hoped to be at fighting the ageing stereotypes.

Rating: 3 stars (out of 5)