



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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IMPERSONAL SPACE

Tutti Arts

Queen's Theatre
Until 28 Oct 2017

Review by Talia Gaertner-Jones

Firstly, I'd like to thank Writer Emily Steel, Company AT Director Julian Jaensch, and Producer/Artistic Director & CEO Tutti Arts Pax Rix for creating such an authentic look at life on the spectrum from many different angles. As a person who has worked with children on the spectrum for many years now, many of the conversations and actions in the performance I have witnessed first-hand. And to have a company, that is believed to be the only Autistic run and led company in the world, present this piece is wonderful.

"Impersonal Space" is focused around lead character Nameless, a 9 year old girl, played beautifully by Kaila Pole. The struggle of the performance is around Nameless and her diagnosis of autism, the reaction of her parents, and interactions with her teacher and peers. Pole's portrayal of the character is well executed, to the anxious 'flapping', the literal responses and her tone of voice. Her parents Mum, played by Jess Lee and Dad played by Sasty convey their dialogue well with Sasty showing varying levels of emotions as he battles with his wife through their daughter's diagnosis and with his daughter when all the emotions just become too much. The family interactions between the three characters are moving and display very real scenarios. A mother unable to cope with her daughter being diagnosed with autism as 'she is just like me' while also placing blame on herself and a dad supporting a diagnosis while trying to explain to his daughter how she isn't different, she's just autistic.

Kym Mackenzie plays the role of Teacher and has to meet with Mum and Dad to talk about the diagnosis, once again creating some very true to life conversations, e.g. how she isolates herself from her peers, is fascinated with facts about Pluto and shouts when the class becomes loud or someone touches her. Mackenzie is supported by a chorus of actors playing children in her class who constantly tease and poke fun at her, purely to trigger a reaction.

Newton (Michael Need) and Einstein (Mikhael Crossfield) create some comic relief in their scenes and are the imaginary friends of Nameless. Their constant bickering is sure to create some chuckles from the audience.

The set and lighting for the performance was minimal yet effective, as the chorus members walked through the space labelling different areas of the house, bedroom or classroom letting the audience create the picture through imagination. This minimal setting also kept focus on the narrative.

"Impersonal Space" is a performance that I think everyone should see. As society is becoming more aware of the word autism this performance definitely gives an insight into what it is to be on the spectrum. It demonstrates that no matter the label – just as how Pluto was labelled a dwarf planet and no longer considered part of our solar system – we all still circle the same sun.