



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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END OF THE RAINBOW

Adelaide Cabaret Festival

Royalty Theatre

Until 22 June 2019

Review by Fran Edwards

This is an extraordinary piece of theatre – a well-crafted play by Peter Quilter about a show business icon which includes some remarkable recreations of her music. It is, of course, about the last few weeks of Judy Garland's performing life. Helen Dallimore is compelling as Judy: the look, the mannerisms, even the voice is right; she even seemed to have the Garland charisma.

The production is focused on the last few shows that she performed in London and the unravelling of her life, which had lurched from one tragedy to another. It is well-known that a domineering mother and the unreal demands of studio life led her to pills, booze and a succession of failed marriages, and blighted her early life as a child star.

The other main characters in this production are her last husband (then fiancée), Mickey Deans, played by Nic English. Mickey makes valiant efforts to clean up Judy's act, to keep her performing. English is completely believable and manages to walk the line between saviour and manipulator. He loves her but does he really see her or just the legend?

The ever-talented Stephen Sheehan is Anthony Chapman, the gay pianist who played for Garland's shows at The Talk of the Town, London. Chapman is clearly devoted to Garland and Sheehan conveys that without losing the integrity of the character. They both give strong performances.

Eddie Morrison plays the minor roles of Bellboy, Stage Manager and BBC Interviewer as well as playing the upright bass. Other members of the fine small ensemble are Warren Harding (trumpet), Tom Pulford (alto/tenor sax and clarinet), Thomas Voss (tenor trombone) and Steve Todd (drums). MD Carol Young has done a great job recreating the sound.

First time director Elena Carapetis brought out the raw emotion in this script; the clear, uncluttered, well-appointed set made the action flow well; and the transitions were smooth. A bittersweet experience allowing us to relive Judy's magic, but so sad to be reminded of a life with so much to give that was cut short. An excellent production.