



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738  
MODBURY SA 5092

[info@theatreguide.com.au](mailto:info@theatreguide.com.au)  
ABN : 93 297 960 525

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## THE CLUB

### State Theatre Company South Australia and KoJo

Space Theatre

Until 20 Apr 2019

Review by Kylie Pedler

Director Tessa Leong has taken a chance in this modern interpretation. With three women, bringing six male characters who live and breathe footy to life, the production is absurd and funny.

While the play by David Williamson, created as a celebration of the great AFL code, dates back to 1977, its satire of the hidden politics and ruthlessly competitive macho behaviour is still relevant. There are issues with sponsorship and recruitment of players and coaches, long standing traditions and power struggles. And with a once-proud team struggling to win a premiership for nineteen years, jobs are on the line. The off-handed focus on violence against women was one of the more shocking themes in the play's original productions. However, in current times with the impact of the media it is more prevalent in the industry and this production with women acting as men heightens this theme.

Act One, set in a football club boardroom designed by Renate Henschke, is well directed by Leong. Louisa Mignone, Nadia Rossi and Ellen Steele work hard to create their multiple characters; Ted, the club president, Laurie, the coach, Gerry the club's administrator whose biggest talent is playing everyone against each other, Geoff the star recruit with a high price tag, committeeman Jock and Danny the mullet wearing has-been. These women represent the mannerisms of the men perfectly, with their swaggering strut, exaggerated poses, 70s attire and many stick-on moustaches. With a strange sense of awareness, through the use of hanging wigs, there is one scene when the three women become five characters all on stage together. Their sense of ensemble is excellent and they milk the laughs (especially with a few unexpected wig dilemmas).

But what begins as hilarious slapstick comedy with energetic doubling and wig-swapping gets overdone and ensures complete confusion throughout the second half. Roles and genders are repeatedly swapped. (Why the characters become feminine donning high heels and lipstick, I am still trying to understand.) Thankfully, a moment when the three take on masks of prominent sports figures and enact a 'footy game show/front bar' scene is a moment of reprieve for the audience.

A brave, unusual interpretation of an Australian classic. If the aim is to make the audience laugh, it achieves its goal. But some further reworking in the second act is much needed.