



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ONCE WERE CLUELESS

Bob and the Vinaigrettes

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 20 March 2021

Review by Helen Karakulak

'Once Were Clueless' is a playful original show that relies heavily on cliché and innuendo. It'll get you laughing, but that laugh may be accompanied by shake of the head and roll of the eyes.

The show follows Bob, played by Robert Donnarumma, as he moves into Opportunity Court and begins to flirt with each of his new single neighbours. Bob is a builder as well as an actor, author and rabbit owner – depending who you ask. The show follows Bob's pursuit of a hobby in juggling, which was inevitably unsuccessful because he overlooked the fact that women talk.

Donnarumma assumes this stupidly seedy character with subtle charm. Although the jokes were cringeworthy, his delivery was strong. His straightforward and clueless tone sells both Bob's idiocy and hopefulness.

Frances Cassar plays Betty, a nurse and one of Bob's suitors. Cassar is incredibly expressive, and her cheeky and confused looks at and because of Bob cements her undeniably powerful stage presence.

Michele Bottroff plays Raven, Bob's animal-loving suiter from house number 1, with confidence. Lisa Campbell plays Jess, the bookworm that caught Bob's attention, with enthusiasm and grace.

Sound and lighting are well utilised to show the passing of time as well as for emphasis throughout.

While the acting and performance elements are strong, the script leaves much to be desired. Initially, it does well to establish female characters that have interests beyond the romantic, speak among themselves and playfully take it upon themselves to stir up Bob once they discover he's flirting with all of them. However, it ticks over into tedious as they play out their teasing.

The narrative lacks satisfying confrontation or conflict resolution. It's disappointing and frustrating to see these seemingly accomplished women sold as confident and playful and yet lacking the communication skills and self-assuredness to be able to stand up to Bob without falling for his charm, resulting in anti-climactic scenes.

Despite the storytelling falling flat and cringeworthy jokes dominating the show, the light-hearted nature of it is an entertaining addition to the Fringe season. The premise of Adelaide artists coming together to write, produce and perform this exclusive Fringe show is admirable, and their passion shines through their performance. You can tell this small ensemble are enjoying themselves, making it an easy watch.

Rating: 3 stars (out of 5)