



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

PO Box 738
MODBURY SA 5092

info@theatreguide.com.au
ABN : 93 297 960 525

SCHOOL OF SHARKS & PROPERTY RITES

Wings2fly

Holden Street Theatres

Until 11 July 2021

By Helen Karakulak

Wing2Fly is a company that specialises in working with young performers, encouraging them to take risks, make strong choices and grow as actors under the guidance of industry professionals. The plays "School of Sharks" and "Property Rites" were an ambitious choice for a young group that often hits its stride in comedies.

The content of these two plays were more serious with "School of Sharks", directed by Alicia Zorkovic, tackling themes of mental wellbeing and climate change. "Property Rites", directed by Michelle Nightingale is rooted in the developments of AI and notions of autonomy. The young performers of Wings2Fly took the more dramatic genre and topical scripts as a welcomed challenge, with consistently focused performances across the casts.

Written by Jessica Bellamy, the play "School of Sharks" follows the fearful Bea, played by Gracie Manifold, as she navigates opening up about her fears with her new friend and putting her worries aside to come to a compromise with the fed-up marine life her small town threatens. Manifold was convincing and endearingly vulnerable as the nervous Bea.

The dialogue of "School of Sharks" is a tricky one to master, with some sentences written unrealistically for characters that are school children, using more adult vocabulary. While this may have been a style choice by Bellamy to indicate that these younger kids were having adult fears, there were some moments that weren't as impactful as they could have been due to the sometimes complex sentence structure. This, paired with occasionally lacking articulation, meant some lines were lost. Despite this, the younger cast projected very well. Across both shows, knowledge of scripts was impressive with only a few stumbles from some.

Costumes by Emma Campbell was a highlight of "School of Sharks", with the simple uniforms of the school children allowing more eccentric costume pieces, such as the impressive shark head donned in the opening scene, to stand out.

"Property Rites" showcased great talent and restraint from its performers, most of which acted as figures in a technologically advanced art installation and were allowed limited movement. This one act play followed desperate art dealer Kyle Macmanus, played by Byron Jeffery, who was willing to go to great lengths to be rid of his debt and make money off of the statues one way or another. Jeffery delivered a captivating and intense performance of the stressed character.

Directed by Michelle Nightingale, "Property Rites" was well blocked, with the figure actors themselves acting as set pieces in their impressively still moments. The ensemble were well synchronised physically as they carried out simple but effective choreographed presentations. There were some minor vocal slips in the sung portion, but all dialogue was impressively in time. Lily Williams delivered a stand-out performance as figure 3, the first figure to fully develop autonomy and persistently encourage others to give in to the urge to come alive also. Williams' desperate pleas and melodramatic characterisation is commendable.



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While more obvious comedy has served them very well in the past, Wings2Fly should be commended for stepping away and encouraging new things from their passionate actors. Overall, both performances were high-energy and reflect an impressive standard of a learning environment showcasing new drama techniques with a short rehearsal time.