



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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SAME-SAME 2.0

No Strings Attached

The Lab

Until March 12

"Same-Same 2.0" is described as a life-affirming online collaboration between No Strings Attached Theatre of Disability (Adelaide, Australia), Theatre Today (Singapore), and Diverse Abilities Dance Collective (Singapore). The bonds between these dance and theatre groups were initially formed back in March 2018, when No Strings Attached successfully performed in Singapore at the True Colours Festival with the world premiere of "I Forgot To Remember To Forget".

For this production of "Same-Same 2.0", audience members could attend virtually as online spectators and participants, or in person, at The Lab, a versatile Fringe venue in West Village.

Perhaps to set the scene and modify expectations, Director/Facilitator Andi Snelling advised the audience at the outset that this was not your "typical" dance or theatre performance, and this was accurate. There was no plot structure, polished script or character development to follow here. This production has been devised by the ensemble participants themselves, in what could be described as loosely interactive, experimental theatre.

In what was possibly a deliberate stroke of genius, "Same-Same 2.0" is in fact, a COVID-proof production. It can be performed in the socially-distanced online world across international borders. Interestingly, a large portion of the online audience for this show were from overseas, with 30% viewing from Singapore, and 10% from Europe....amazing!

However, as a live audience member at The Lab, I felt like "Same-Same 2.0" probably worked better for the online viewer. The three key performers: Jack, Cody and Zoe were seated onstage behind tables looking at laptops throughout most of the performance, which served to engage the online audience effectively, but visually did not work so well for the live audience at The Lab, although the familiar Zoom-style meeting view and colourful images were prominently projected on the background walls. Unfortunately, there were audio-visual syncing issues throughout, meaning that it was sometimes difficult to understand some of the dialogue from the on-screen participants. Perhaps a little technical direction could address this issue in future, which at best was distracting, and at worst meant that spoken words were completely missed.

The content of the show revolved around the experiences of disabled performers during the pandemic, which were reflected in relatable ways, such as sadness about the impact of restrictions on our social lives and so on. Like the title, the show reminds us that our wishes for the future are the "same same", regardless of our ability. However, I did wonder if there was some unrealised potential here. Perhaps a lost opportunity to educate the non-disabled in society, that the pandemic has affected people with disabilities and their carers uniquely and profoundly? I also would have liked to see the stars of the show burn a little brighter: more of Jack's joyous laugh, Cody's cheeky wit, and Zoe's dance moves!

Whilst this is a far cry from the best work of No Strings Attached, such as I Forgot To Remember To Forget, "Same-Same 2.0" is a unique, living example of how the arts can truly bring people together.

Rating 2.5 stars (out of 5)