



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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GROPING FOR WORDS

St Jude's Players

St. Jude's Hall, Brighton

Until July 30

Review by Andy Ahrens

If you are reading this, you are most likely in an elite tier of people worldwide who are classed as 'literate'. You have successfully navigated the Internet, found the links and put your literacy skills into practice.

Literacy, or lack thereof, is the subject of St Jude's Players' production of "Groping for Words". The play reminds us of the difficulties faced by those who cannot read and write.

Popular author and playwright, Sue Townsend, has taken a light-hearted approach to this serious issue.

"Groping for Words" is a humorous and endearing look into the lives of three illiterate people. What they have in common is that their citizenship and place in society suffers as a result of their poor literacy skills.

George (John Leigh Gray) is homeless and out of work. Gray provides much sincerity and sensitivity in his role.

Thelma (Amy Hutchinson), is an overly anxious and needy young woman. Hutchinson is consistent throughout her performance. She plays the flustered and flippant Thelma with an ironic degree of maturity.

And thirdly, there is Kevin (George Banders), a young warden struggling to cope with the paperwork. Banders isn't subtle in his interpretation. He is so outlandish one could question why he was employed in the first place. Nevertheless, he throws himself into this interpretation and makes it believable.

Balancing the action is Joyce (Julie Quick), a teacher in adult literacy who finds herself in the midst of these unique strangers. Quick is exceptional, working opposite three largely over the top characters to provide a sense of hope and calmness to their chaotic worlds. Her own character doesn't suffer for this. Quick allows us to share Joyce's frustrations as well.

Director Linda Davey has staged this production remarkably well in the confines of the venue. With a script that jumps around a bit and is let down by lack of resolution, Davey does well to keep it heading in one direction. She is supported by simple and effective technical components.

"Groping for Words" is an entertaining production with solid performances. It provides plenty of laughs amidst the sad reality that reminds us of society's responsibility towards literacy and learning.