



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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LITTLE MAN

Cabaret Fringe Festival

Nexus Arts

Until 12 June 2021

By Helen Karakulak

"Little Man" is an endearing showcase of how music shapes experience, hitting all the right notes for a quality cabaret. Brenton 'BJ' Shaw is an incredibly charismatic performer, with a commanding stage presence. He relaxes into himself on stage in both lighter moments like breaking into smiles saluting his audience with a 'cheers', and the more solemn, like displaying a deeper vulnerability discussing losing a parent.

Accompanied by Mat Morison on piano, Shaw guides the audience through a setlist that combines youthful 90s pop, with a welcomed opening ode to the Spice Girls, and sincere ballads. The production weaves together stories of love and loss through hits and original songs by Shaw that complement each other well. Shaw's vocal arrangements of covers are unique enough that they feel fresh, rejuvenated by his warm timbre. They're tweaked to suit the tone of the performance without straying so far that the tracks are unrecognisable.

Directed by Catherine Campbell, Shaw's expressive gestures and confident posture draw in audiences to his colourful commentary between songs. A particularly notable piece of storytelling was a tale of young, closeted love, in which Shaw portrayed a relatable urgency and desire. The performance was well-paced, using effective comedic timing when humorously interjecting in a recollection.

"Little Man" is structured as a personal anthology of coming-of-age blunders and celebrations in this enjoyable cabaret. A slightly jumbled timeline, referencing events in various years out of order and calling back to one another, may halt engagement, taking viewers out of the moment while following the story. However, this is not so much of an issue that it interferes with understanding the message or hindering the quality of the performance, as Shaw draws audiences in with ease.

"Little Man" is a wholesome night of musical theatre that delivers in producing a love letter to queer youth. Through moving anecdotes about relationships with parents, friends and lovers, coupled with an appreciation for music that shaped his youth, Shaw's energetic performance is full of reassurance and joy.