

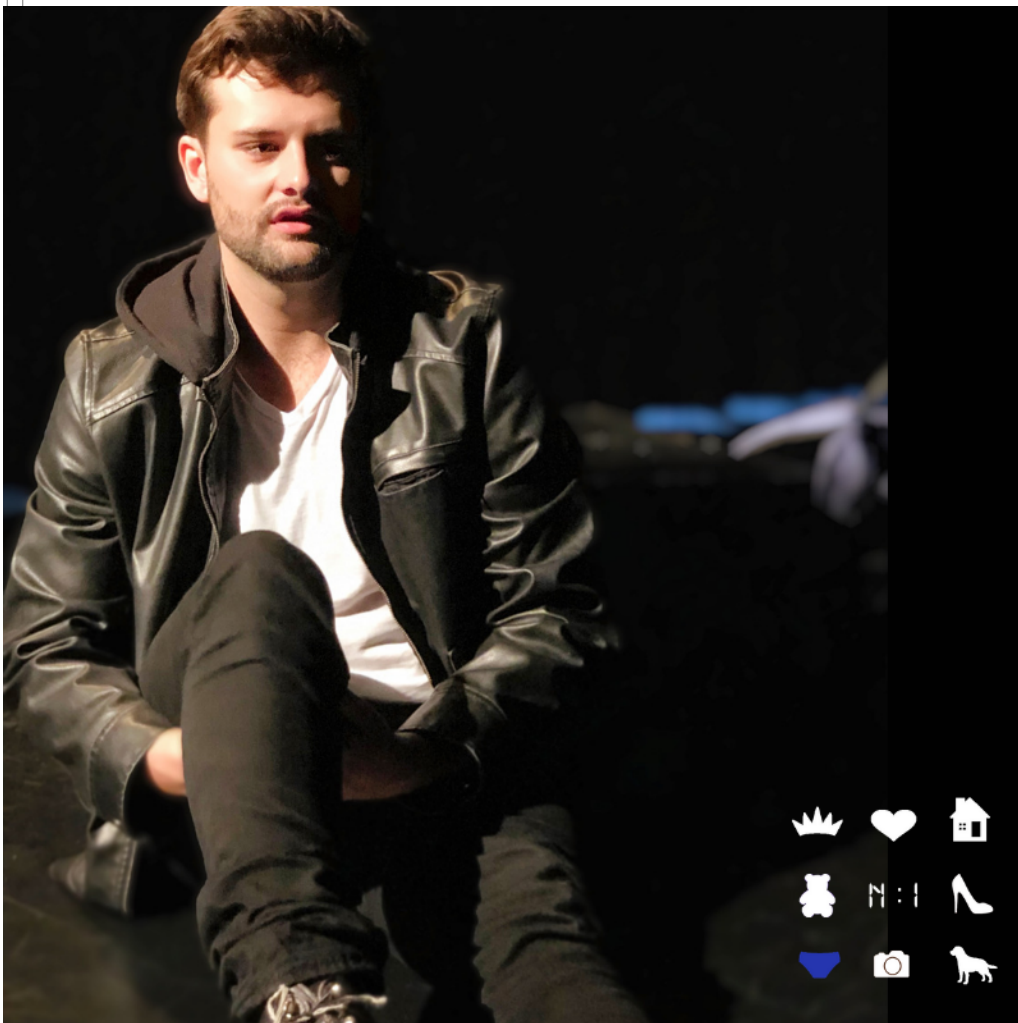
# Night Writes

## Sydney theatre reviews

AUGUST 10, 2019 AUGUST 10, 2019 *by* NIGHTWRITESYDNEY

## Final Placement & Bleach | Theatre Travels

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- [2019, ARA WATSON, CARLY FISHER, CHIPPEN ST THEATRE, DAN IRELAND-REEVES,](#)
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Life can get wild and unruly at times, throwing unexpected obstacles at people with the very best intentions. In the final week of one act play festival No:Intermission, the office of a social worker and the romps of a sex worker show off the worst sides of humanity from bad luck to bad choices and everything in between.

In a welfare office in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Mary (Samantha Lambert) is caught unexpectedly amongst the clutter of toys, clothing, paperwork, and general life detritus by Luellen (Dominique Viney). Mary and Luellen know each other well because Mary was the social worker assigned to investigate claims against Luellen and her partner about abuse of their son Jimmy which ultimately led to Mary authorising the removal of the child and his introduction into foster care. On a hot Friday afternoon, these two women represent brute opposing forces bound by an often inadequate welfare system.

Ara Watson's script navigates a sensitive area of bureaucracy often hidden from general view and experienced by those in crisis. Luellen is desperate to get her son back and the help she needed months ago, before she hurt Jimmy, appears useless when offered now. At the same time, Mary is charged with operating the front lines of a government agency requiring her to maintain a cold distance even while caring for other human beings. Their confrontation is unsatisfying because they're trapped in a lose-lose system.

The direction of the production from Carly Fisher cuts through the frayed emotions with an everyday mundanity of Mary needing to get her job done so she can start the weekend; an attitude that sharpens the wrenching sadness of child protection and removal. Mary's position is a difficult but necessary one and the audience feels for her in Lambert's outbursts. Viney plays Luellen with a whiny neediness that evokes responses alternating between sympathy and pity, while her nervous energy forms the major forward momentum of the production.

Another world away, on a grotty London tube, Tyler (Tom Crotty) contemplates the dark turn his life has taken when he witnessed a murder while working at a client's house. Tyler took up sex work both for the thrill and to fund his new freedom in the big city but he didn't expect the impact his job would have on his sense of self and the potential relationships he was hoping to cultivate.

This one man script by Dan Ireland-Reeves is a black comedy about isolation and desire which circles around the character's fixation on disappearing. When things are going badly, Tyler imagines the pleasure of fading away but when things are going well, he feels threatened by the notion of it all getting taken from him. His passive participation in murder simultaneously places unthinkable pressure on his conscious while also putting great power in his unsuspecting hands.

Crotty is phenomenal as the solo performer. His arcs through arrogance and fear, sexual power and violence, and revealing vulnerability at home is captivatingly convincing. Crotty's comfortable stage presence is contagious as he invites the audience directly into Tyler's world, building his history and intricate reality alone. Rosie Niven's direction keeps the production well paced with appropriate emphasis on key emotional beats throughout, including the remarkable turn Tyler takes in selling his sex/murder tape online.

*Bleach* is an unorthodox story through which to explore loneliness and modern disconnection but it taps into a particular mode of being in anonymous cityscapes that burrows quickly under the skin.

Final Placement was running from August 7th – 10th and Bleach is running from August 8th

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