

# Night Writes

## Sydney theatre reviews

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## Lady Liberty and the Donut Girl & Broken | Theatre Travels

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- ◉ [2019, CHIPPEN ST THEATRE, EMILY SUINE, ERIC LANE, FRED PRYCE, JESS DAVIS, MARY ANNE BUTLER, MATTHEW TAYLOR, MICHAEL NIVEN, NO:INTERMISSION, REVIEW, SAMANTHA CAMILLERI, SAMANTHA LAMBERT, SYDNEY, THEATRE, THEATRE TRAVELS](#)
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The two plays paired for week two of No:Intermission at Chippen St Theatre are thematically linked around blossoming romances, hidden pasts, and the thrill of future possibilities. Two teens find a rocky but exciting new connection right before the college rush in *Lady Liberty and the Donut Girl* while another couple of pairings reach crisis point on the heels of tragic accidents in *Broken*.

Wes (Michael Niven) has, quite frankly, stolen a lot of money from his step-father and now has to work it off as the mascot for his tax accountant business, *Lady Liberty*. While on the job, Wes catches the eye of a senior from his school Erin (Emily Suine), who is also working as a donut girl but for different reasons: to help support her single parent family. The two begin a quirky flirtation that grows more romantic as the weeks pass.

Eric Lane's script treads a well-worn path of an up-tight girl learning to let go and be carefree through the blasé attitude of a new love interest. The point of difference is Wes's complicated relationship with his parents and damaged sense of self which manifests in many lies and immature approaches to romance. When Erin announces her plans to leave for college, the unpredictability threatens the future of their relationship with an unsatisfactory dissolution.

Direction from Fred Pryce focuses heavily on the serendipity of the teens' connection and the myriad possibilities a new love opens up. Scenes are spread across their casual hang-outs around town with occasional monologue interludes from Erin, unpacking her fixation on food metaphors and her experiences working in a supermarket. The relaxed tone of their relationship translated to what seemed like a hands-off approach to the production with a lighting design that often struggled to adequately light scenes and the complete absence of a sound design, which undersold the potential of the production and left it feeling overall lacklustre.

*Broken* follows a slightly older love affair between a husband (Matthew Taylor) and wife (Samantha Camilleri) who are struggling to stay connected through the drudgery of work and marriage. Camilleri's character thinks a baby will spark something fresh but her plans disintegrate when she suffers a miscarriage and the guilt and shame doesn't allow her to share her pain with her husband. At the same time, a chance encounter with Ash (Samantha Lambert) after her car crash gives Ham the thrill he was searching for and opens up the possibility of an exciting new life without history and responsibility.

Mary Anne Butler's script allows the characters to self-narrate their streaming thoughts and feelings through emotional turmoil and key life decisions. Their thoughts overlap and interrupt each other as their stories weave in and out, building opposing worlds: comfort/excitement, new/familiar, whole/broken. Lambert well represents the murky disappointment of unfulfilled fantasy while Camilleri demonstrates an alternative desperation that is almost palpable. Taylor's character is a precarious mediator but also instigator of the emotional strife of those around him, which additionally takes its toll.

There is nuance and complexity to each relationship because of the many things left unsaid between characters attempting to navigate their own desires. Jess Davis's direction captured the delicate balance between connection and isolation present in these unexpected and ever-shifting circumstances. The set design with a crumpled car opposite a Hills Hoist with gum leaves strewn throughout demonstrates the spectrum of experiences between isolation and connection where the external facade doesn't necessarily correlate to the lives underneath.

Two stories with three relationships that constitute the thrill of change against the comfort of familiarity. *Broken* and *Lady Liberty and the Donut Girl* circle around consideration of the driving force for so many of life's decisions: love.

*Lady Liberty and the Donut Girl* is running from July 31st – August 4th while *Broken* is running from August 1st – 4th at Chippen St Theatre as part of No:Intermission.

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