

All Change – Stage Whispers Review

Adelaide Fringe 2019. Smokescreen Productions, supported by STARC Productions.
Supporting Dementia Australia. Mainstage, Bakehouse Theatre. February 25 - March 2, 2019



Life can be at least as messy as elderly Ivor's room. Whenever we think we've tidied it up, something else comes along to throw the cat among the pigeons...or in Ivor's particular situation, to throw the clothes out of the suitcase and back on the floor.

Ivor is suffering from dementia and while he has his lucid moments, much of the time he is forgetful and vague, lost in his imaginings or

in the sweet, more ordered memories of long ago, of past family life with his now deceased wife and his daughter Lily when she was a child and teenager. It is a world where trains and timetables are playing a part, both in the past and now.

In TH Marriott's insightful English narrative, we meet the pair as adult daughter Lily arrives at Ivor's place to pack his suitcase for the inevitable move to a nursing home. The life train Ivor is on is about to change tracks, but Ivor is not going meekly. As fast as Lily packs his things into his suitcase, Ivor scatters them back out onto the floor. But Lily has a significant derailment happening in her own life, something that she must explain to Ivor. Will he understand its devastating meaning or even remember it tomorrow? Ivor's journey may indeed have an uncertain destination.

Tim Marriott gives a wonderful performance as Ivor. He embodies the sweet vulnerability, frustrating stubbornness and heart-breaking tragedy of dementia, with this highlighted in the contrasting scenes of 'the past'; family times in which Ivor is mentally agile and physically 'younger'.

Stefanie Rossi is a fine actor and gives a nuanced portrayal as Lily; as she was as a child and a teenager, but particularly, as an adult woman with her own burdens who must still draw enough strength and cheerfulness from within herself in order to care for her father, Ivor.

This top notch Adelaide Fringe production is very 'real'. It is a telling, poignant, not at all maudlin, gentle comedy about the impact dementia can have on any one of us and on our loved ones. It reminds us of the need to live in the moment, to savour today and, especially, to never waste a moment for making memories.

All Change is well and truly on the right track for a memorable night out.

Lesley Reed