

## BROADWAY WORLD REVIEW – LOWGROUND

by [Barry Lenny](#) May. 7, 2018

Reviewed by Fiona Talbot-Leigh, Friday 4th May 2018.



The story of Rapunzel remains one of my all-time favourite fairy tales from childhood. Introduced to it from the safety of my mother's lap, I delighted in this intricate tale of darkness and love. How wonderful to be able to revisit it again as an adult in the production of **Lowground**, a musical retelling of Grimm's fairytale from Tower Productions that is suitable for all the family.

Written and produced by Adelaide songwriter, Casey Thomson, this show has been ten years in the making, and debuted to a nearly sold out season. Lowground is a beautifully presented piece of musical theatre, turning a somewhat dark tale into something quite extraordinary.

Thomson seems to have drawn from Celtic, folk, and medieval influences, as she pulled this classic tale together through story and song, set against a very simple but effective backdrop of a makeshift tower, complete with golden hair and a worn armchair where, it seems, many a tale has been told. It is the central piece, though, that is the most striking. In front of a black curtain stands a stunning sculpture of reclaimed wood, bronze, and steel, aptly named We the People: Dear Hart. This original work of art was made by multi-award-winning sculptor Clancy Warner and this sets off the somewhat stark set, of which the musical ensemble is also a part.

In the far left corner, shrouded in low light, are the musicians, who set the scene upon entry and fill the intimate space with a tease of what is to come. These four musicians: Emma Luker, on violin and cello, Dee Trewartha, on guitar, Shaun Doddy, on percussion, and Kerryn Schofield, who weaves magic on her flute and contrabass flute, are all well-known in Adelaide's classical, folk, and contemporary music scenes, and they complement each other beautifully.

As the light dims, our story begins, as the Imp, played by Jonathon Crouch, crawls out on all fours to enlighten us as to how Rapunzel came to be. His laid-back style of storytelling and song was the perfect introduction to this tale. Thomson brings her original songs to life as the witch, and Kacey Guy Stevenson's theatrical debut as the prince was well received, as his rich vocals brought substance to the lovestruck and forlorn prince, but it was Courtney Robb, as Rapunzel, who was a highlight in the show with her beautiful soulful voice, complete with vulnerable undertones.

Thomson has succeeded in producing a very different form of musical theatre. Her original music scores are well crafted, quite haunting, and surreal. She takes the audience along with each character on a well thought out and somewhat spellbinding journey, made all the more delightful with Bianka Kennedy's costuming and the already mentioned set design.

Kennedy's costuming captured each character perfectly, from skull adorned shoulder pads on the witch, to Rapunzel's very clever hoop skirt, reminiscent of a cage. Together with great lighting from Stephen Dean and an exceptional mix of sound from Noni Espinosa, it all makes for a very entertaining hour.

Thomson has proved herself an adept songwriter. The musical arrangements of the songs are just beautiful and this exciting new work from her was simply a joy to sit back and witness. Let's hope Adelaide doesn't have to wait another ten years for the next one.