

CHASE THE FEELING

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 27 Feb 2016

Review by [Linda Edwards](#)

"Chase the Feeling" is a world premiere production that was written (and is directed) by Michael Allen as part of his Masters of Philosophy in anthropology of theatre. Billed as a "poignant and satirical assassination of theatre and autism," the play revolves around Tahlia, who has been diagnosed as autistic and whose therapeutic government-funded drama workshops are about to end because she's turned 18.

Tahlia wants to be heard and to express herself in her own way without being told what to say and how to think "normally", whatever that may mean. Why should she be judged by someone else's standards and be labelled "disabled" just because she thinks differently, she asks? And why does she always have to be the one who is forced to conform to other people's opinions on how to be, or relate to concepts she finds foreign?

Tahlia is played with great sensitivity and control by Leeanne Marshall. Julian Jaensch and Nikki Allen play characters in Tahlia's subconscious who come to life as Tahlia struggles against a system that appears to be determined to make her disabled. They both seem always to be "real" rather than acting.

The play grew from fieldwork Allen carried out for his Master's degree but is far from dry and academic, packing plenty of drama, tension and humour into its 60 minutes.

If you've ever wondered what being autistic is like, this play will give you some insight, although the spectrum is very broad and experiences of those on the spectrum differ widely from each other. Two of the performers are on the spectrum. Even if you have no particular interest in autism, the show will entertain and enthrall you and give some food for thought about the ways in which society tries to mould and manipulate people into conforming to some supposed "norm".

Rating: 4.5 stars (out of 5)