

Death in Bowengabbie

Bakehouse Theatre

Until May 10th 2014

*Death in Bowengabbie* is a wry, light-hearted and sharp piece of theatre that rises far above its station. From the opening lines to the very last word, Caleb Lewis' lyrically descriptive, witty and sardonically incisive script has the audience savouring every scene, every character and every moment. Everything moves at a brisk pace, the single actor has plenty of presence, and there's no shortage of dark humour. In short, it's a brilliant play.

Boasting striking language, a charming premise, hilarious epigrams, and a surprisingly reflective narrative, the production uses dark fun to explore deeply emotional issues about place, death, love and the state of rural Australia.

Bowengabbie is dying and so is its elderly population. With the closure of the local jam factory, (the town's only industry) most of the young people have moved to the city. The only reason anyone visits the town is for a funeral. Oscar returns after his Aunt Jeannie chokes to death on a melon ball. At the funeral he spies Abby and his feeling for her hits him like a freight train. But he's heading for Dubai after he marries his fiancé Ruth. However, Oscar is drawn back to his childhood home to attend the funerals of his uncle Harry and then his Aunt Maggie - who dies in her sleep with the aid of vodka and sleeping pills. Of course, he runs into Abby again and old flames are rekindled. But when his pop passes away Oscar begins to suspect foul play. Who is responsible ? What's really going on in Bowengabbie?

Elliot Howard (Oscar et al) is a fine narrator, and is equally adept in all the parts, as he eloquently tells the tale of Oscar and the funerals that bring him back to the small town. The actor is expressive, a tad off-beat and charming which all adds to the fine entertainment. Indeed, the delivery is as immaculate as the script and the direction. Everything about this well-written, superbly acted and authentically engrossing work is top-notch.

Go see *Death in Bowengabbie*, it's a funny and beguiling play that won't disappoint.

*Stephen Davenport - Indaily*