

COCKROACH REVIEW

4 STAR REVIEW – HI-FI WAY: THE POP CHRONICLES

Ovid's *Metamorphosis* is invoked in **Cockroach** at The Studio in Bakehouse Theatre to look at the victims of rape at the hands of the gods. We are introduced to Daphne, Philomena, Medusa and Callista who are raped and then transformed into trees, stars, animals and flowers and then told that these are cautionary tales. The feminist subtext is very self-evident here, and is an important underlying theme as the women in this play have undergone their own transformation and are now offering their own cautionary tale for men to hear.

The protagonist "C", is an everywoman who has been subjected to all manner of abuse and rape at the hands of all manner of men, and this grunge-cabaret prose-poem explores the life of every "C" who wakes up from sexual abuse and seeks her own "amoral revenge". "C" metamorphoses into a cockroach and actor Leah Donovan presents a powerful bravura performance displaying a justifiably enraged attitude that has her screaming and moving her very flexible long limbs in distortions that have you believing in her transformation into a cockroach. She even croaks like you would imagine a cockroach would croak if it could.

But it is not all post-punk grunge angst as much of the live music played by Benito di Fonzo would have you feel. There is disarming humour in **Cockroach** as Leah Donovan often pauses to remind the audience that the classic writer has written about rape as a cautionary tale, and then glints that she is now rewriting her own cautionary tale for abusive men to heed.

Writer / Director, Melita Rowston has written a fast paced play with intertextual references to not only Ovid's *Metamorphosis* but Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* too; and while Kafka's protagonist Gregor Samsa goes into a downward spiral as he transforms into an insect because of his failure to act, "C" embraces her cockroach transformation. From the pestilent vermin that she has become, she acts, and acts decisively as she seeks revenge against her transgressors.

As Rowston says, "Anger is an important emotion. It signals that something is wrong. It is a vehicle for change". Her **Cockroach** is cathartic theatre and there is a "sense of release, revelation and redemption". She is a very skilful writer and Leah Donovan is a fabulously talented actor.

This is a cautionary tale that needs to be seen.



Fringe Review By Bob Becker