

Spitfire Solo



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Adelaide Fringe. Bakehouse Theatre. 26 Feb 2020

There is some compelling and exquisitely performed theatre in this year's Adelaide Fringe, and *Spitfire Solo*, which has played here before to rave reviews, is one of them. Do add it to your calendar!

Spitfire Solo is another production for a solo performer, and it is written and performed by Nicholas Collett. It is set across the lifetime of Peter Walker, a retired WWII pilot who fought in the Battle of Britain eighty years ago. Over fifty enthralling minutes, Collett gives us an intimate glimpse into Walker's life, ranging from his terrifying missions in the war, meeting his wife to be, and her untimely passing, the estrangement of his daughter, his guest speaker efforts in a school, through to him meeting his granddaughter for the first time.

It is a touching story and Collett is a consummate story teller. Every word of his beautifully crafted script is brought to vivid life through a sustained and completely enchanting and disarming performance. His body language effortlessly conveys him as is a young man, as well as suggesting of the aches, pains and stiffness that comes with old age. Him miming being in a Spitfire during battle is unsettling – you almost feel the aerial manoeuvres and vicariously experience Walker's fear and exhilaration.

The setting on the Mainstage at the Bakehouse Theatre is ideal. There is an eclectic collection of chairs, a table, and a few hand props. Everything has a purpose and is used in inventive ways to draw you into the multilayered story. Occasionally there are projections on the rear wall of old WWII film footage to add to the atmosphere and give context. Stephen Dean's lighting is perfect, again, and goes to prove that even minimalistic effects that are expertly designed and executed are capable of great impact.

The script plays out across a number of time periods, moving seamlessly back and forwards between them. This is not an uncommon theatrical device, but it rarely works as well as it does in this superlative production.

Nicholas Collett's *Spitfire Solo* is worthy of your time. Do experience it yourself. You will love it.

Kym Clayton

When: 26 Feb to 7 Mar

Where: Bakehouse Theatre

Bookings: adelaidefringe.com.au