

The Sentient Arrow



By Jennie D'Ambra. Directed by Matthew Briggs. Briggs & Heaysman Theatre Co. The Bakehouse Theatre, Adelaide. Adelaide Fringe. February 22 - March 5, 2016

The Sentient Arrow consists of three short dramatic monologues, each focused on a character haunted by regret and insecure about the present state of their lives. The first monologue is delivered by an aviatrix (Melissa

Martins) embarking upon a record breaking flight, who, over the course of her journey, feels compelled to re-examine her childhood and question what motivates her to take extreme risks. In sharp contrast to this, the second piece focuses on a washed-up, failed painter (Robert Donnarumma) who relates to the audience how his fear of taking risks prevented him from living a happy, fulfilling life. Now middle-aged, he laments that he never went out on a limb to reach for the kind of success achieved by the subject of the third monologue – a glamorous Hollywood movie star (Martins again), who is driven to alcoholism by the relentless media spotlight and unrealistic expectations of her adoring fans.



Each of these monologues comes loaded with a heavy dose of self-pity, and Jennie D'Ambra's erudite writing sometimes skirts the edge of being purple prose. Still, there are affecting moments of truth in each, and the two performers both give solid, unnervingly intense performances. Donnarumma's sad, lost puppy dog demeanour makes you want to get up on stage and give the poor guy a hug, despite the fact that

many of the character's problems are self-inflicted. Martins is equally accomplished at playing an image conscious public figure who has become adept at hiding her true emotions and a strung out drunk who can't contain her frustration at the social hypocrisies she sees all around her.

Matthew Briggs' dynamic blocking and incorporation of various props and projected imagery into each monologue ensure that the proceedings are visually, as well as verbally, engaging.

This deliberately uncomfortable work is often difficult to sit through, but is never pointlessly sensationalistic or vulgar. Those looking for challenging, confronting theatre at this year's Adelaide Fringe Festival will get their money's worth and then some from this emotionally explosive, thought provoking production.

Benjamin Orchard