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B.C.

December 7, 2009

**By Rita Kalnejais,
The Hayloft Project Black Box,
The Arts Centre
Until December 19
Reviewer Cameron Woodhead**

THE previous show I saw from the Hayloft Project - a berserk and shambolic reworking of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* - had me convinced that this bright young company had lost its mojo. How wrong I was.

The latest, *B.C.* by Rita Kalnejais, is a captivating, vital and achingly funny production that heralds a powerful new voice in Australian theatre.

A cheeky renovation of the Immaculate Conception, the play imagines Mary (Nicole da Silva) as a teenage girl living in the 'burbs with her dysfunctional family - parents Joachim (Tyler Coppin) and Anne (Margaret Mills), and her intellectually disabled brother Gabriel (Dylan Young).

Our Lady of Chadstone? The play certainly has a keen sense of comic absurdity. But Kalnejais is less interested in satirising the biblical story, or even the trashiness of consumer culture, than she is in creating an accumulation of moments that finds traces of the sacred in the ordinary.

Amid burgeoning physical and situational comedy - really, some of these short sequences are almost skits - there are revelations of astonishing poignancy.

Some masterfully understated scenes between Coppin and da Silva portray the tumult of emotion as a father realises his daughter has become a woman, as she does too. Director Simon Stone has nurtured some fantastic performances. *B.C.* is of a school of postmodern theatre that finds truth through and under caricature, and however vigorous the comedy (Zukerman's Joseph, in particular, had me in stitches with his ethnic posturing), it is always yielding to unpredictable and subtly drawn moments of quietude and epiphany and distress.

The stage is split by horizontal glass sliding doors, a feature that augments some of the mystical, non-naturalistic action. Gabriel's reality - peopled by talking birds and dreams of fallen, naked angels - takes place behind the screen, as his family munch half-heartedly on Red Rooster in the foreground.

B.C. is inspired theatre and it wouldn't surprise me if it's picked up by our mainstream theatre companies for future seasons. I hope it is. I want to see it again.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2009/12/06/1260034218465.html>

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