

Snow White @ La Boite Review

Written by Jesse Chaffey for SCENESTR. 9 September 2016



Image © Dylan Evans

Fairytales have been transformed countless times over the years, and it's always a gamble seeing how different versions will turn out.

Thankfully, La Boite Theatre – in collaboration with Opera Queensland and Brisbane Festival – knows how to put on a show, and do it well. Their version of 'Snow White', directed by Lindy Hume, is mysterious and ravishing from the get-go, starting with its grainy, monochrome poster featuring an axe-wielding Snow White. We're not in Disney anymore.

The audience is greeted by a breathtaking set... One that starts from the ground and creeps up into the ceiling. Mirrors, chairs and wooden branches hang from above, and a multi-storey wooden structure towers over one corner of the performance space. If the idea was to get a reaction before the lights even went down for the show... It worked.

With music by Zulya Kamalova and co-creation by Suzie Miller, 'Snow White' begins feeling as though it might be one of those deeply complex and mentally taxing pieces of theatre, however as the show progresses it becomes clear that the messages and the themes are really quite simple. The famous "mirror, mirror on the wall" is not just an object; in this production he is personified, and played by the wonderfully flamboyant and utterly hilarious Kanen Breen. Asking him for advice and constant validation for her vanity is the Queen, taken on by the sleek, striking Silvia Colloca. With a strong desire to follow in her mother's footsteps, Snow White – played by Stephanie Pickett aka Ella Fence – is a headstrong, brave heir to the

throne. Michael Tuahine shines, even as the dark, brooding Huntsman.

With a cast this strong, there isn't much room for error. 'Snow White' draws on the Grimm tale, draining it of the technicolour and whistling dwarves that so many are familiar with, and replacing it with shadows, operatic vocals and stunning live genre-less music. The detailed costumes, designed by Karen Cochet, deserve a mention as well.

Not only is the acting in this production truly professional-standard and faultless, but the music sets the mood perfectly. Zulya Kamalova has crafted something that is, in her words, hard to define. This isn't a bad thing, however. It keeps the show interesting... One minute the cast is sweeping around the stage to the chilling sounds of a slow, orchestral score, and the next, it's hard not to groove to a dubstep-inspired arrangement.

A standout moment is the poisoning of Snow White via the Queen's apple, as the Queen has a moment of realisation and collapses over her daughter's body. The music – and singing – that follows, is beautiful, and immaculately captures the despair and confusion of the Queen as she wonders what she has done.

The Mirror serves as a stellar departure from the darkness, creating a window between the performance and the audience as he makes his way around the performance space singling out audience members who dare make eye contact with him.

This well-polished and aesthetically stunning opera-slash-theatre piece is gripping from beginning to end, being carried through by a powerful cast.

La Boite, Opera Queensland and Brisbane Festival truly bring 'Snow White' to life in this enthralling interpretation of a story loved by millions around the world.