

## The Courier Mail Review

by Phil Brown, Arts Editor, June 7, 2018

IT'S a play based on maths but *The Mathematics of Longing* just doesn't add up. If I subscribed to the theory that, if you don't have something nice to say about something say nothing at all, I would stop now.

But I can't, so here goes.

La Boite Theatre Company has served us up a confused, unfathomable and vaguely insulting hour of theatre that really shouldn't be in a theatre. Not yet. Maybe with years of workshopping and rewriting this play (if it even is a play) might be suitable for presenting to the public. Might be. But in its present form it isn't.

Which is a hell of a shame because I loved the idea of a production that explores relationships in the context of physics, quantum theory and the advanced mathematics behind it. Mind you this has been done before, rather excellently by Queensland Theatre, in *Constellations* by British playwright Nick Payne, which explored similar territory. Playwright Suzie Miller, whose production house The Uncertainty Principle is behind this show, may have been influenced by that and other precursors but she has overreached and laboured the ideas. There's talk of black holes and dark matter, string theory, multi-verses and the laws of attraction and she has tried to relate these to human relationships but it doesn't work. What we are left with is a string of unconvincing dramatic vignettes strung together in a melange of mediocrity.

I guess it's experimental - a play that is part dance featuring The Farm's Kate Harman and Gavin Webber who move in mysterious ways throughout the show. The Farm is a Gold Coast-based dance/movement collective that has quite a reputation and they helmed this production.

Todd MacDonald, Ngoc Phan and Merlynn Tong are the unfortunate thespians who have to perform the main roles and they never really seem that comfortable with the material.

As for the relationships explored, well, there was no emotional truth in them at all for me. The expository monologues, full of pretentious stabs at scientific profundity are dull and verging on meaningless. And the science stuff was like Brian Cox giving a lecture to a kindergarten.

My son, who is 17 and knows a thing or two about such matters, sat next to me and groaned his way through this production. His assessment was pretty accurate actually - that you just shouldn't go near subjects that you are not that well versed in.

The cross or multidisciplinary nature of the show should have been cool but it was really quite tedious and the whole thing had an undergraduate feel. And all that fiddling with props that didn't quite work was distracting.

It's a shame because I was totally up for it when I arrived. And hell, it's only an hour long. I figured I could cope with that. But it started fifteen minutes late, which is nigh on unforgivable, and the hour that followed seemed like an eternity. Which seems appropriate, really, considering the subject matter.