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Brel causes a stir

February 11th, 2010 | By: [Erin James](#) | [News](#)

Making a stir at the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP) is a brand new work, *Bienvenue à Brelville*. This lyrical and compelling new show is based on the songs of Belgian singer/songwriter Jacques Brel and promises to be a theatrical experience to remember. Playing in Sydney only until tonight (Thursday, February 11), the show will head to the Adelaide Fringe Festival next week.

Written and conceived by Sydney-based performing artist and filmmaker, Sarah Hansen, the work was borne out of her love for Brel's music, which she discovered during her year-long sojourn in France in 2005.

Now fluent in the French tongue, Sarah Hanson (and her company – Catch That Wave Productions), joined forces with Michael Cutrupi (and his company 'The Collective') to create, workshop and stage *Bienvenue à Brelville* for the Adelaide Fringe Festival, 2010.

AussieTheatre.com spoke with the shows co-producer Michael Cutrupi about the show and it's exciting future, and the next generation of theatre makers in Australia.

"The Collective was started last year as a weekly forum for actors, writers, directors dancers, to try out new stuff. I guess it's like a saloon for artists. We'd read a play every week, workshop things and this is our first production", Cutrupi says.

Sarah Hanson approached Cutrupi last year with an idea for a show based on Brel's music. The workshop process began soon after:

"We have been through several draft scripts with the cast to end up where we are today."



Cutrupi explains how he believes the show is a type of “experiential theatre”.

“You come to the theatre and you don’t tune out. It’s not a black box, you’re not watching T.V. – it’s another place. Whether you love it or hate it, it’s not a passive experience, it’s involving. That’s where we are coming from.”

Part cabaret, part theatrical ‘experience’, *Bienvenue à Brelville* follows a young man’s journey to rediscovering his love, dreams and lust for life.

What began as a remake of the song cycle *Jaques Brel Is Alive And Well And Living In Paris*, ended up moving in an entirely different direction.

“Brel’s songs are all about love, or love gone wrong, or relationships. With this material at our fingertips during workshops, we went down a different path and ended up with a new script and new concept. We are doing a few songs in French, most in English and one song in Flemish.”

The shows at ATYP are essentially working like previews to the upcoming season in Adelaide, where the company will be working with members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra to create the finished product.

“We will have a 4 piece ensemble for the shows in Adelaide, which is very exciting”, says Cutrupi.

Bienvenue à Brelville boasts a cast of four: Molly King, Dan O’Leary, Sarah Hanson and Michael Cutrupi.

With this dynamic, young cast, the show is set to take the 2010 Adelaide Fringe Festival by storm, playing at the Parisian-inspired cabaret venue, ‘La Boheme’ from February 20 – March 8.

Although Sydney-siders, have only one more night to experience this exciting new work, the show will play in Adelaide for 9 performances.

So, take the time to check out a new wave of Australian theatre makers, and an exciting revitalisation of Jaques Brel’s beautiful music.

Topics Mentioned:

ATYP

La Boheme, 36 Grote Street

Reviewed Monday February 22nd 2010 (See Fringe guide for dates, times, etc.)

Presented by Catch Wave Collective.

<http://www.adelaidefringe.com.au> or 1300 FRINGE (374 643)

<http://www.catchthatwave.com>

Bookings: Fringetix & Venuetix outlets



Luc (Daniel O'Leary) is a singer songwriter who, every day, watches a girl waiting at the bus stop. He has convinced himself that her name is Madeleine (Mollie King) but, although he loves her from afar, he cannot bring himself to do anything about it, even though he is goaded by his housemate, Alice (Sarah Hansen), who secretly loves him. One day, to his horror, he sees a strange man approach Madeleine and spirit her away. The stranger turns out to be Bouboule (Michael Cutrupi), a magical clown who transports Luc to Amsterdam, where he is subjected to a series of bizarre episodes that are designed to teach him a number of life lessons to bring him to the point where he has the confidence to approach the girl at the bus stop.

Using the songs of the Belgian singer songwriter, Jacques Brel, including *Amsterdam* and *Madeleine*, of course, as well as *Carousel* and many others, the cast of four weave a complex and haunting tales in this surreal fantasy, directed with a keen eye for the absurd by Felicity Nicol. Singing mainly in English, with a few numbers in the original French, they are accompanied by a fine trio of musicians with Jackie Hansen on piano, Alison Heiki on violin and Dean Newcomb on clarinet, all three being members of the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra.

Ideally suited to this intimate cabaret venue, the production is musically rewarding as well as offering a wealth of fine physical theatre. The four performers inject considerable energy and enthusiasm into this intricately constructed narrative, creating a worthwhile and thoroughly enjoyable evening of dark comedy, music and imagination.

Reviewed by Barry Lenny, GLAM Adelaide Arts Editor.