

Review: Mighty, Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre

ArtsHub

SUZIE GIBSON

Mighty is an exceptional new drama developed by Adam Deusien in collaboration with Alison Plevy, and one of Australia's most astonishing living sculptors, Harrie Fasher.



Kate Smith and Tanya Rodin in Mighty. Photo by Phil Blatch.

Mighty is an exceptional new drama developed by Adam Deusien in collaboration with Alison Plevy, and one of Australia's most astonishing living sculptor's Harrie Fasher. Over a two-and-a-half-year period Fasher, Deusien and Plevy worked collaboratively in forging a connection between theatrical production and visual art. This has resulted in highly stylised and impressive production that oscillates around a key question: 'Is might right?'. Such a question came from a concern that there is a disproportionate amount of value given to power especially when it undercuts other ways of being in the world –attitudes and sensibilities that are morally commendable such as compassion and kindness.

Significantly, *Mighty* also the product of a four-year conversation between Deusien and Plevy who were disturbed by their own industry's embrace of power where directors are encouraged to impose their will upon theatrical production. While the dominance of a single vision might be appropriate for certain kinds of artistic practise, the very nature

of theatrical production itself requires the expertise of many different kinds of people and elements that might not flourish under a domineering person. It is clearly what most perturbed Deusien and Plevey whose *Mighty* questions the power, whilst revealing the immense potential of creative collaboration.

As a deeply collaborative production, *Mighty* draws upon the expertise of many in producing a very immersive experience of physical theatre. When the curtain opens, all production elements are affectively combined in creating an extraordinary tableau. Fasher's moveable steel beams are organised in one hierarchical configuration where actors imperiously assert their bodies through gaps and apertures. Intensifying this opening show of power are actors costumed in Elizabethan collars – we are reminded of a past where power was once embodied in a single monarch. Grand music and stark lighting contribute to *Mighty*'s opening that evokes a world where power is concentrated through a single individual. Such a dramatic scene is followed by a rousing political speech expertly delivered by Kate Smith. Here the absolute rule of Queen Elizabeth the first is channelled through Smith's authoritative voice, highly made-up face, and neck-strangling collar.

Mighty begins with all of the vanity and egoism that comes with absolute power in order to question the rightness of might. As such, power's symbolic armoury is gradually cast off as performers discard their high Elizabethan collars and other clothing flourishes in revealing the fragility of the human form.



Alison Plevey, Tanya Rodin and David Jackson in Mighty. Photo by Phil Blatch.

We are thus reminded that power itself can be fragile – it is not an easy 'thing' to possess. *Mighty*'s conversation about power's limits is largely- expressed through a series of physical interactions with sculptural forms. And there are some breathtaking moments of agility. For instance, David Jackson's Olympic style moves on a metal beam inspire our awe and the balletic duet between Alison Plevey and Tanya Rodin captures the surprising beauty and efficacy of human vulnerability.

The might of a monarch, a politician, a theatre director, a man or a woman is questioned throughout this thought-provoking drama that reminds us through a physical move of our mortal bodily existence. Such mortality however is capable of art and aestheticism and there is an unconventional power communicated through this.

The fact that the cast of *Mighty* is predominantly made up of women also makes one contemplate the relationship between power and gender. In another stand out moment, Kate Smith recites fragments from Julia Gillard's famous misogyny speech reminding us of how Australia's first female prime minister was often mistreated on the basis of her gender. Women are still under-represented in our political system even though they make up 50% of the population.

There is much, much more to recommend about *Mighty*, especially its moments of hilarity, but suffice to say that it is very moving and memorable a celebration of collective creativity and how the fragile human condition is capable of mighty things.

This exceptional regional production is not to be missed!

Rating: 5 stars ★★★★★

[Mighty \(https://www.bmec.com.au/17-what-s-on/946-mighty.html\)](https://www.bmec.com.au/17-what-s-on/946-mighty.html)

Created By: The Company

Director: Adam Deusien

Technical Director: Becky Russell

Sculptor: Harrie Fasher

Designer: Annemaree Dalziel

Composer: Aaron Hopper

Performers: Alison Plevey, Tanya Brown, Carolyn Eccles, David Jackson, Kate Smith

28 February - 2 March 2019

Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre

FIRST PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY 1 MARCH, 2019

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Suzie Gibson is a Senior Lecturer in English at Charles Sturt University.

Jobs News Career Advice

BECOME A MEMBER

UNLOCK UNLIMITED ACCESS

ArtsHub

VIEW PLANS (Plans)