



KING LEAR

THEATRE IN REVIEW BY: MYJANNE JENSEN

In what's being heralded as this year's most exciting theatre production, Bell Shakespeare's 'King Lear' lives up to its reputation.

The classic and often quoted "best work" from William Shakespeare, 'King Lear' is one of those plays that continues to remain influential, effective and forever appealing. Literally a tale about royalty, the story goes deeper than simply talking about kings and queens, fleshing out the universal theme of family feuds and bickering. 'King Lear' is more of a tragedy and tells of love and shows how we express it can mean something very different to different people.

In a bid to determine how he will divide his land, Lear challenges his three daughters to compete

with one another to prove to him which one loves him most.

In a display of charming words, the two older girls flatter their father with poetic affections, playing on his elaborate ego. When it comes to his youngest and most beloved daughter Cordelia however, he is horrified to learn she has no way of voicing her love for him, but would rather show it through her behaviour.

This does not sit well with the King however and in a fit of rage, Lear banishes his youngest daughter and leaves his fortune to her sisters. As time goes by, King Lear realises the full impact of his brashness and gradually begins to lose his mind and power.

Set in a most simple yet cleverly constructed space, Bell Shakespeare utilises the bareness of the stage to bring the audience into the lives of the characters and to create an intimacy not often found in conventional theatre. The scenes

are beautifully thought-out and the combination of instruments being played alongside the acting and in the full view of the audience gives a rawness to the production.

An example comes with the introduction of the play where a woman enters the scene playing a vintage, hand-held music box. The characters are assembled on a rotating circle in the middle of the stage, giving the impression that the audience is in fact peering into a real life music box.

'KING LEAR' PLAYS AT THE PLAYHOUSE QPAC UNTIL SATURDAY MAY 22.

