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Courageous confessional by millennials

Second part of The Truth About Lying has more resonance than its first



The Truth About Lying presents sketches of actors being overlooked at auditions, underpaid in roles and even bullied. PHOTO: TUCKYS PHOTOGRAPHY

[Akshita Nanda](#)

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This production has a lot in common with the millennial artists it represents. The result of conversations between young actors and written and directed by newcomer Tan Liting, it is slick, endearingly energetic and full of potential only partly realised.

Staging this confessional piece about the difficulty younger actors face in finding jobs is an act of courage. An earlier iteration, a dramatised reading at Centre 42 last year, received much flak on the theme that millennials just do not have the stamina required to make it in the theatre scene. They do have talent, though, and kudos to The Finger Players' mentorship schemes for giving it outlet through its Guest Director series.

The play alternates younger actors' angst with snippets of conversations Tan had with veteran theatre practitioners after the first version.

The actors, M. Haja, Shafiqhah Efandi and Chanel Chan, are first seen in black activewear eating strawberries - an easily bruised fruit millennials are compared with - or sweeping the stage or doing yoga. They take turns introducing their characters through monologues, two warming up while one speaks, until all have donned different costumes, ready to role-play.

In keeping with the in-your-face attitude of the play is the set's centrepiece, designed by Noor Effendy Ibrahim. A giant glass pane outlined with light bulbs ensures that viewers in the first few rows can see their own reactions and emphasises the stereotype of self-involved youngsters.

REVIEW / THEATRE

THE TRUTH ABOUT LYING: HERESY AND COMMON SENSE FOR THE THEATRE

The Finger Players

Drama Centre Black Box/ Thursday

BOOK IT / THE TRUTH ABOUT LYING: HERESY AND COMMON SENSE FOR THE THEATRE

WHERE: Drama Centre Black Box, 100 Victoria Street, National Library Building, 05-01

WHEN: Today, 3 and 8pm; tomorrow, 3pm

ADMISSION: \$35 from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to sistic.com.sg)

The first half of the play is wickedly self-referential and likely to be understood only by insiders. It goes for style over function as the actors prep for the roles they play in the second half. Audience attention is distracted by physical activity that does nothing to add empathy for the characters being built.

Most viewers are likely to sit up only in the second part, when the actors present sketches of being overlooked at auditions, underpaid in roles and even bullied. The unfairness is obvious to anyone who has worked for a living and not just in theatre.

Focusing on content like this with a wider resonance would have brought the play to the next stage. It is currently a work-in-progress, a millennial creation that has not decided what it needs to be. It is an entertaining work brimful of possibility, but a showcase more of hopeful ambition than actual achievement.