

Month: February 2015

Wildcards Finals

(<https://shortandsweetsydney.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/6-alternate-serve-pub-1.jpg>)

Heading into the Wildcards Finals from our first week of Short+Sweet Sydney 2015 is “**Alternate Serve**” written by Paul Madden and directed by Michael Whalley. Are we entitled to complain about the food at a charity dinner – and is the waiter to blame? Starring Craig Hall (Waiter) and Simon London (Brett).

Wildcards Week 2 brought us the

(<https://shortandsweetsydney.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/03-pee-buddies-pub-1.jpg>) hilarious buddy comedy, “**Pee Buddies**”. Following a desperate man as he enlists the help of a co-worker to conquer his embarrassing fear. Written by Shane Murphy and directed by Jon Emmett, the cast is made up of Reece Lyndon, Scott Dias and Jon Emmett. Winning both the People’s and Judges votes, “Pee Buddies” won the title of the Wildcards Winner, and earned a place in the Short+Sweet Sydney Gala Finals!

Coming out on top of a Judges’ tie, as determined by the audience votes, “**Shirley vs the Squirrels**” is in our Wildcards Finals from Week 3. Written by Camilla Maxwell and directed by Kel Vance. Debby Tilley, Margareta Moir and George Trippis demonstrated how, in an ongoing battle for her prize-winning garden, Shirley attempts to enlist the help of her daughter and son-in-law to protect and defend her crops from those shifty, yet at times cute, bastards called squirrels. “Shirley Vs. The Squirrels” earned a place in the Gala Finals through the People’s Choice vote!

(<https://shortandsweetsydney.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/10-lost-property-pub-1.jpg>)

Wildcards Week 4’s “**Lost Property**” has found its position in our Wildcards Finals. The clothes don’t make the man...unless you’re Superman and you’ve had your costume stolen in the locker room of a Sydney train station. To what extremes will the dashing defender go to save his threads and his dignity? Written by Robert Luxford and directed by Grace O’Connell “Lost Property” stars Nick Wright (Superman) and Jenae O’Connor (Clerk).

“**Darling Daughter Daisy**” from One Carriage Productions is in the Wildcards Finals from our great Week 5 programme. Since Daisy’s dad left her and her mum for White Box Lady, it’s

(<https://shortandsweetsydney.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/07-darling-daughter-daisy-pub-1.jpg>)

been tough. How’s a little girl to cope with such emotional turmoil? Cue Maisie, a great friend with no strings attached... Well, sort of. Debbie Neilson also starred in this piece, directed by Luke Reeves.

Big things come in small packages for our sixth Wildcard finalist, "**Gnome Matter What**". Written by Donatella Parise and directed by Robert Teicher. Xenia Bevitori, Nicolas Francois and Jim McInnes star in this love triangle about 3 garden gnomes that magically come to life! A romantic comedy about the trials and tribulations of being a garden gnome statue and wanting love as well as other things!

"**Winter Retreat**", a heart-warming story of Jessica and Jim, who meet at a Meditation Retreat far from their home, both trying desperately to get past a significant tragedy. An unlikely friendship is formed when Jessica and Jim discover that perhaps they can hold that forgiveness space for each other until they are ready to let go of their hurt and move on. Written by Abigail Somma and directed by Anne Brito, this play stars Nell Nakkan and Edric Hong. Tying first place for the Judges' Choice along with "**Feather**", "**Winter Retreat**" had the greater audience votes and will be joining us at the Wildcards Finals!

Sally thinks that offering a delicious cup of coffee to her housemates was a friendly gesture. Oh, how wrong can she be... "**Put That Coffee Down**" rounded out our Act 1. Written by Toast D'Bechamel and directed Glenn Groves, this play stars Kim-Cuong Do (Ava), Jessica Gray (Hunter), David Bond (Martinez) and Jo Elizabeth Finnis (Sally). Taking out second place in our Judges' Choice, and taking the lead in our People's Choice, **Put That Coffee Down** might just have that extra shot at the Finals!

Our ninth and final play of the evening is "**Aggie**" by Golden Jam Productions. Aggie want's Sev, Joe wants Aggie, Sev just wants his poparts! Adapted from Chekov's short story "Agatha" under the guidance of Hilary Bell, "Aggie" is a modern day farce about love, fidelity, fear of commitment, and delicious treats. Starring Natalie Freeman, Joseph Louis Westwood and Jacob Thomas, "Aggie" is written and directed by Nicola James.

Mark and Charlotte had a fight at dinner. But will Charlotte get the chance to say what she needs to say? For Kevin. #WWKD "**I See You**" is written by Amy Maddison. Directing a cast of Jessica Saras (Charlotte) and Thomas Atkins (Mark), was Julie Zimmerman. Thanks to PM-Partners for rehearsal space, and The Dapper Brothers for their artwork.

"**Take Two**", is the final Wildcard play making its way into the Finals. A couple discovers that reconciliation can be tricky—especially when a pre-nup is involved. The piece has been written by Chris Shaw Swanson and directed by Marcelle Wever.

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Short And Sweet Gala Final

Short and Sweet Theatre is coming to an end after staging over 160 plays. The Gala Finalists are in the running for a wide range of prizes and awards including; Best Production, Best Script, Best Director, Best Actor/Actress, Best Newcomer etc. With some great prizes on offer including make-up tutorials, vouchers, theatre tickets, lighting services, and the incredibly generous prize from the Genocchio Family, in honour of their son, the first Artistic Co-ordinator of Short+Sweet, Sam Genocchio, of \$5000 cash for the winner of Best Director.

The Gala Final consisted of thirteen 10 minutes plays. After seeing the finalist I am glad I didn't have to judge. I definitely had my favourites but to find the best for each of the awards would have been very difficult.

I had three favourites - Shirley Vs The Squirrels, Wish and Scratch.

Shirley Vs the Squirrels is a look at how we cope with grief. It is a comical piece about Shirley who has just lost her husband and her daughter tries to get her to

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organise the funeral but Shirley is pre-occupied with the squirrels in the garden. She has to guard her plants! It is her coping mechanism for her grief. It was very well written, produced and acted.



Wish, I saw in week one. It is written by a very young writer Bokkie. I thought that the choice of actors was perfect for this piece. For such a young writer the dialogue was superb. Wish is about Stephanie who is

terminally ill and her Wish is to meet her childhood hero Jack Grant. The meeting doesn't go exactly as either of them planned.

Scratch took home many of the awards. Again it was very well written and acted. It is a black comedy about James who owes not money, but DVD's to the wrong people. He is blooded and tied to a chair for the whole performance as the Boss and his two heavies try to reclaim the DVD's. As Ellen puts in her review below very Quentin Tarantino but with humour!

So it is over, in Sydney for the year but Short and Sweet will return.

Written by Philippa Bird

The Short+Sweet Theatre gala finals at the Factory Theatre capped off a stellar season of bringing talented amateur playwrights, directors and actors to Sydney audiences. Thousands of plays are submitted to the competition each year, and are cut down to a shortlist of 300, a staging of 160, then a top 80, which is then whittled down to a wee 13 plays, and the calibre of the talent on show just keeps getting better.

The gala evening opened with a creative commentary on Aussie politics, *Screamers!*, which disturbingly melded the madness of question time into the narrative of *The Wizard of Oz* with a twist of *Mad Max* 3. Dorothy (Joseph Chetty) pulled the confounding

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expression we all recognise when we hear the absurd tidbits that trickle from our pollie's tongues, and writer-director Gavin Vance gave a comically camp rendition of Tina Turner's *We Don't Need Another Hero*, dressed to the nines in Aunty Entity garb.

The travails of old age were broached with Camilla Maxwell's hilarious *Shirley vs. The Squirrels*, about a widow slipping into senility with an ultimately justified obsession with squirrels, featuring an en pointe performance from Debbie Tilley as the gun totin' title character. While the engaging Unforgettable, devised by actors Stephanie Priest and Drew Holmes, visits a boisterous old couple in a nursing home where they share bittersweet tales of their long lives, and the tragedy of forgetting.

The eternal gender wars were waged in Adam Szudrich's *Manstruating*, about a couple who struggle to empathise (or over empathise?) with each other's hormonal labours, with a stand out comic performance from Best Actress winner Emma Playfair. And in Scott McAteer's *Transactions*, where a lonely middle-aged man pays a prostitute to play the blandest role-play she can imagine: a suburban housewife. Actors Ivano Del Pio and Karissa Lane are a dynamic pairing, in a piece that beautifully explores the complexity of male desire. Which was subsequently subverted by the character of Blake in Serhat Caradee's *Speaking Freely*, where we are privy to the thoughts of a hilariously mismatched pairing on a blind date: woman (anxiety, horror, self doubt), and man (sex, sex, sex).

But in an evening filled with unique plays, the winner was writer-director Tom Green's *Scratch*, where bearded hipster James (Jed Clarke) is chair bound and tortured - a la *Reservoir Dogs* - by the "Boss" and his two goons, Johnny and Bob, who just want what they're owed: a stash of... overdue DVDs. Totally absurd, but performed with such sincerity by the actors (helmed by the magnificent James Shepherd),

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after ten minutes I thoroughly believed deploying goons to be as justifiable a method as Video Ezy's very real collection letters. Though the goons at least have a sense of purpose - for love of film. It isn't any wonder why it took home the prize sweep of Best Script, Best Director, Best Production, People's Choice Winner and Best Actor for Shepherd. If you told me the piece was from Tarantino or Guy Ritchie, I wouldn't doubt it, the name TOM GREEN is now burned on my memory as one to watch closely. Such is the pleasure of Short+Sweet, not just a showcase for talent, but a chance for us - their humble audience - to enjoy them.

For more information and for upcoming performances across categories, head to the Short+Sweet website, <http://shortandsweet.org>.

Written by Ellen Becker

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