

# Reamus Theatre at Maitland Repertory Theatre

## William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*

### Review by Genevieve Graham

'The emotional and rational collide in *Lord of the Flies*'

The theatre doors close with a crash and we're engulfed by the darkness. Let the chaos commence.

*Lord of the Flies* is a story that precedes itself and is known to many. But even if you've read the book or seen the film directors Isabelle Moy and Thomas Henry have really made the story their own. In the midst of a war a group of schoolchildren, or in this play's case teenagers, are left to fend for themselves on a deserted tropical island. What could go wrong?

The decision to make the characters teenagers was necessary for the age of the cast but also inspired. This age bracket is on the precipice between childhood and adulthood when passion, anger and desire for independence are at their height. Those emotions boil over quickly and spectacularly as the teens make disastrous attempts to govern themselves. We also watch them spit in the face of death as if they're playing a game but the real-life consequences of this are hidden just under a fog of delusion.

The choice to treat the entirely male identifying characters with a gender blind cast is jarring at times, but is something the audience can easily look past especially as the events of the play unfold. Instead, the more remarkable thing is the reflection of the degradation experienced by the characters through the degradation of their costumes. This is handled impressively well with crisp and clean-cut uniforms slowly becoming more mangled and useless. No one displays this better than Hannah Richens character of Roger. The costumes really intensify this already intense character who's gaze I find I'm actively avoiding as they look out over the audience.

The stage extends from the corner of the theatre and into the audience creating a wonderful and intense experience of being face to face with the actors. Being on your level and in your face, they pulled me into the unease and anxiety that quickly builds in this play. The psychology of 'them vs us' magnifies personalities, weaknesses become derided and the human capacity for cruelty is on full display which makes for an uncomfortable but meaningful experience. Ralph played by Thomas Henry and Jack played by Jace Pickard take on their roles naturally. They play out the tension of morality and immorality until you start wanting to pick a side. This story is demanding of its actors. On the stage they are pinned down and wild in the corner of the room. It is impressive to watch and must be a real challenge to act out.

Even though it was written in 1954, *Lord of the Flies* makes me realise that people don't really change over time. When put under pressure and stress, the dynamics between people are still the same. We like to think we could play the game differently but I challenge you to watch *Lord of the Flies* and not be swept up in the age-old mentality of groupthink and lose your individuality. Or as the characters might put it "kill the pig spill its blood, kill the pig spill its blood, kill the pig spill its blood..."

Book and find out more at <https://www.mrt.org.au/2023-season/lord-of-the-flies/>