

### 41 SECONDS

#### [Bakehouse Theatre](#)

Until 17 Mar 2018



Review by [Sarah Westgarth](#)

Tackling the crucial and complex issue of suicide is no mean feat for any production. "41 Seconds" is an original play produced by Talk Out Loud, a local not-for-profit organisation that provides targeted suicide prevention initiatives for young people. Performed by a combination of trained actors and the organisation's volunteers, the production represents a concerted effort to make sense of this all too common tragedy. There are noble intentions here, and the play dives head first into a conversation we need to be having. Unfortunately, "41 Seconds" suffers from a heavy-handed script, stilted dialogue, and unrealistic performances.

A lot of the actors involved are inexperienced, and it shows. The broadness and melodramatic performances feel like something out of a high school play, and it's uncomfortable to watch when dealing with such a sensitive subject matter. The material they have to work with also doesn't help, as the script is laden with exposition and clichés. One of the cardinal rules of writing is show, don't tell, and there's far too much telling going on here. Majority of the characters deliver monologues to the audience, explicitly recounting their feelings, which feels like a lazy way of navigating the complex emotional reality of the aftermath of suicide.

There is also a limited narrative drive; majority of the action takes place on the same day after the character of Nick takes his own life, and this feels limiting in its depiction of the effect such an event can have. The ensemble of characters is so large it becomes unwieldy, as the connections between them and the relationships become vague. There is also a myriad of sub-plots, most of which are never resolved, and this becomes distracting. The drama presented, mostly in heavy-handed conversations, plays more like a soap opera than realistic personal interactions. The timeline also feels muddled, and other details, such as the age of some of the characters, are unclear. The production is also plagued with technical difficulties, which doesn't help matters.

There are some powerful moments, such as Nick's first monologue where he describes his own death, and Denise Alexander gives a nuanced and heartbreaking performance as Nick's mother. Giving the show more of a clear focus, and allowing the audience to see the more lasting impact of Nick's death over a longer time period, perhaps with flashbacks, would have improved things. The character of Nick also continues to be on-stage as a ghost-like entity, reacting to his friends and family mourning him. This means the impact of his loss is never felt as strongly as it could be.

The work done here by Talk Out Loud's founder Mary Galouzis as both writer and director is to be admired for its intentions. The discussion around the ripple effect of suicide is one we should be having, and "41 Seconds" does do its best to do so. Making clear sense of such a tragedy is difficult though, and it's hard to find a balance between not placing blame, but also encouraging us to look for the signs and reach out. There is no doubt there will be audiences who are impacted by the production, and the sold out crowds indicate there is a need for these kind of stories to be told. If it has the ability to start a much-needed conversation, then that can only be a good thing.

Rating: 2 stars (out of 5)