

Presented by Bakehouse Theatre Company
Reviewed 26 April 2014



Winner of the 2009 Fringe 'Best Written' award, Caleb Lewis' **Death in Bowengabbie** returns triumphantly to the Bakehouse Theatre, directed by Peter Green, with Elliot Howard starring as, well, everyone.

Death in Bowengabbie proudly proclaims itself as one of the 'top 970 greatest love stories of all time', but I'm willing to say that, because of its dark and quirky nature, it should really be up there in the

300s, if not higher!

Oscar (Elliot Howard), a man who is soon to be married and promised a successful future in Dubai, is called back to his small, outback hometown of Bowengabbie to attend the funeral of an aunt. Though he is at first happy to return to his roots, he is eager to get out as soon as possible and return to his fiancée. That becomes difficult though, as his relatives in Bowengabbie begin to drop like flies. Returning repeatedly for one funeral after another begins to take a toll on Oscar's wedding plans, as does a chance meeting with Abby, the local beauty.

It is impossible not to notice the creativity and thought that went into the writing of this play.

Essentially one long monologue, **Death in Bowengabbie's** script is just about as clever and as beautiful as works of Tim Winton, and as humorous (dry and dark, but humorous) as the writing of Douglas Adams. There were so many moments in Oscar's speech that struck me as just really nice to listen to, or really quite intelligent. The setting and events of the story were all told fantastically in an almost poetic way, which really didn't require any more than one performer to get across.

Howard does a fantastic job of delivering the monologue, with hardly a mistake or missed beat. For someone to deliver such a complex story in such a compelling way is definitely a sign of talent mixed with lots and lots of practice. Howard is able to go from funny to sad and from one person to another at the flick of a switch. Although a few punches thrown between different characters were a bit awkward at times, he did do a good job of showing the interactions between characters and making them all unique individuals.

There is a definite Australian small-town flavour to **Death in Bowengabbie**. If you've lived in a sparsely populated country town you'll understand the dilemma that many young people face, whether to leave for pastures anew or stay for the sake of family and friends. There is a tinge of sadness to the play that offsets its quirky humour in just the right way. There is also a little bit of the surreal and absurd at work, as evident in the monolithic gravestone that looks over the town and the bizarre business plans of one of its inhabitants.

All in all, **Death in Bowengabbie** is a brilliantly written, directed and performed play that will engross everyone, be you country-folk or not!

Reviewed by James Rudd

Venue: Bakehouse Theatre, 255 Angas Street, Adelaide

Season: 24 April – 10 May

Duration: 1 hour

Tickets: \$15.00 – \$30.00

Bookings: Book online through the [Bakehouse website](#)