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News, Analysis and Comment

THEATRE REVIEW - The Rules of April, Newtown Theatre (Sydney)

by [Lynne Lancaster](#)

Arts Hub

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'Happy families are all alike : every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way'
(Tolstoy: Anna Karenina)

Where was everyone? This small scale, but impressive production deserves much bigger crowds than the miniscule audience it had the Friday night I attended.

April and her family are on voyages of discovery and acceptance of themselves and others.

With great acting and a strong, well-crafted script by Wayne Tunks it tells the story of three sisters - April, Belle and Eva. They (well, April really) had made it a 'rule' in their teens, among other things, not to fall in love. The play examines dysfunctional family relationships. (their parents have been trapped in an unhappy marriage for years, the children observing the marriage falling apart and determining not to go down the same path), sibling relationships and rivalry, the 'dating game' and fear of commitment from both sexes. It also analyses contemporary society, looking at divorce (the parents, Keith and Meredith, announce their separation at the beginning of the play) and also gay relationships (Keith reveals he is gay and we meet his lover, Zeke. Will Zeke be accepted as part of the family?)

We watch the build up of the relationships between beautiful Belle (Gina Pollock) and Patrick (Salvatore Coco) disintegrate into disaster on their wedding day with the wedding being called off. Usher (Luke Rogers) and Eva's (Bree Desborough) relationship – which also seemed so happy and full of promise also ends in tatters. As in Tennessee Williams, Pinter or Albee, intense family relationships splinter and crack at important family gatherings (eg birthday parties or Belle and Patrick's wedding).

And what will happen between April (Simone Oliver) and Finn (Adam McGurk)?

Sterling performances were delivered by all...elfin, magnetic Desborough as the alluring Eva beautiful Pollock as the stunning, thoughtful Belle and Oliver as the domineering yet loving eponymous April. And as the overbearing, officious, slightly hysterical mother Meredith Jane E Seymour give another an excellent performance.