

# Showcase of youthful brilliance

## REVIEW

**DNA**  
**TREVOR KEELING**

*DNA* is a play with many layers, delivered with punch and energy with a great cast displaying enormous talent, stagecraft and once more TheatreiNQ have done it.

This is clearly a different offering from this amazing Townsville theatre group which customarily displays such professional excellence that each time I write a review on the company, I feel as if I have to reach for the dictionary to find fresh superlative attributes.

Artistic director Terri Brabon attacks every piece she does with such verve and individuality that the sheer variety in the styles and presentation of each work leaves one quite breathless.

Her innate instincts and sense of theatre are impeccable, and each production has an individual shape, and this one sees her shifting her attention to The Bridge Project.

This innovative TheatreiNQ program fosters Townsville's young theatre talent by preparing them for life in the theatre by experiencing a

level of training and performance experience which teaches them not only skills in theatre and performance but also the essential discipline that the profession requires.

The physical and vocal work, technical expertise and response to Brabon's positive direction in this play spoke such volumes so much it was difficult to believe that they are performers in training.

And that is precisely what *DNA* does. Playwright Dennis Kelly (known primarily now as the co-writer of *Matilda the Musical*) wrote the play in 2007 for Britain's National Youth Theatre.

It is the dark – and at times humorous – tale of a group of teenagers who accidentally kill one of their classmates, and try to cover it up, sparking off a web of lies and deceit that lead to darker exploits and more lies, and more importantly how each person responds to the situation.

It is a contemporary tale, and from the very first scene this was apparent when all cast members entered with their heads bowed to the almighty worship of the mobile phone, devices which Brabon cleverly turned to theatrical use throughout the 90-minute production.



**OUTSTANDING:** Elyse Phelan as the talkative Leah and Jacob McCarthy as her boyfriend Phil in TheatreiNQ's excellent *DNA*.  
Picture: CHRISSY MAGUIRE.

The play is a multi-layered piece which probably raised more questions than it answered with its themes such as bullying, fear, social structure (or lack of it), responsibility, violence, gangs and friendship.

Characteristically, the production

moved at an exhausting pace, and it sparkled with the characterisations from this ensemble piece.

Particularly outstanding was Elyse Phelan as the talkative Leah. This young actress displayed a stage presence and ability way beyond her

years, showing remarkable comic timing and an emotional journey that was clear and easily discernible.

A great future is predicted for this fine young performer.

Resembling a young John Malkovich, her boyfriend, Phil, the silent, quasi-sociopath was played with a concentrated energy bordering on menace by Jacob McCarthy.

Each member of the cast was outstanding in their own way.

Rita Neale gave a commanding performance as the bully Joanne, while Faduma Ali and Kelly Pronk continued their development as actors with well-observed performances.

Byron Howells gave an excellent reading as the histrionic Brian, while there were splendid vignettes from Laura Pastega and Victoria Fowler and a strong contribution from Emma Benson.

In short, a wonderful choice of play for the training program and people in the cast and a fine example of what TheatreiNQ is doing to invest in wealth of young talent in Townsville.

**>>DNA continues until 18 May at TheatreiNQ Theatre, 50 Allen Street, South Townsville. Book on [www.theatreinq.com](http://www.theatreinq.com)**