REVIEW: **Production: Instructions For Life**

**Director: Gaye Poole**

**Reviewer: Aimie Cronin**

Hamilton director Gaye Poole produces something different every time. I admire her courage in tackling new works with a cast ranging in age and ability and, here, creating it all from scratch.

The ensemble is tight. Where some of the inexperienced actors appear self-conscious and unnatural, others in the cast carry them along. In a powerful piece in the middle, Stephanie Christian shaves the face of a man who is battling dementia (played by Clive Lamdin). They nail it.

It's a modern, sometimes funny, sometimes touching collection of work that would have been better suited to the Playhouse at the Gallagher Academy of Performing Arts where it had its first run last month. The stage at the Gaslight is small and the surroundings are dated. But the cast works hard to charge on.

It may have been because of the space limitations that some scenes did not work. The opening piece, not quite in blackout, was a bizarre collection of unrelated sounds that made me think we were in for a long night. Also a scene with sand went for too long and seemed utterly pointless. The music was overpowering at times and dominated scenes - again, perhaps a space issue.

The beauty of watching a series of short works is that if you don't like one, another one shortly follows that clears the slate and has a fresh shot at it. I liked Will Collin talking about cricket; Amanda Wallace reading a letter; I liked watching them all put on their shoes.

The instructions for life, told to the audience so earnestly by Miriama Rowell-Tuhakaraina, are simple and easy to relate to. It's certainly worth heading along to watch the ones that work because they work so well.

Instructions For Life will be performed at the Gaslight Theatre, Alpha St, Cambridge, tonight at 7.30pm and tomorrow at 2pm.