

## Theatre Review: The Rise and Fall of Little Voice

Little Voice, Big Show: [Rachel Sanders](#) is captivated by Drama Soc's production of this 1992 Jim Cartwright play

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Credit: Greg Tiani



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Screams, silence and songbirds. All and more are delivered in this week's DramaSoc production of *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*, playing this weekend in the Drama Barn.

You walk in to a domestic scene, the stage proportionately divided into a large living room, offstage kitchen and small bedroom. LV (Scarlett Simmons) sits motionless on her bed whilst her mother, Mari Hoff, (Ashley Milne) lounges on a sofa, several bottles littered on the floor which mirrors her daughter's array of records in her bedroom. Their broken relationship sets the tone between them for the rest of the play as we see LV bullied, abused and belittled constantly by her one surviving parent.

Her mother, incredibly enamoured by her new telephone, soon brings home Ray Say (Josh Gorroño Chapman), a sleazy, cheating good-for-nothing cad who discovers LV's talented impersonations of her dad's old records and pushes her to perform. After inviting Lou Boo (Michael Maitland-Jones), the local club's manager, to hear her astonishing voice the two of them exploit her as an impressionist 'artiste'. Despite success and the insistence of her mother, LV eventually breaks down, only finding comfort in the surprising but endearing friendship formed with Billy (Mitchell Siddons), a nervous but passionate lighting electrician. Her only other friend is Sadie (Freya Dawes), their neighbour who despite also being bullied by Mari, does her best to be a mother to LV.

Stellar performances came from Milne as the obtrusive and abusive woman who makes LV's childhood miserable. She certainly pulled off the larger-than-life character, screaming in her daughter's face and not being shy about her new love affair with Mr Say. Chapman's performance as Ray was just as slick and slimy as expected, being awkward and uncomfortable at the right moments. Maitland-Jones played the business-minded Lou Boo well, pairing neatly with the sleazy Ray. Milne's character contrasted, sometimes humorously and sometimes painfully, with the softer, sweeter maternal figure portrayed by Dawes.

I think everyone fell in love with Siddons' performance of Billy, the adorably shy and introverted sweetheart who revealed himself as a complete lighting nerd. This played beautifully alongside Simmons' character, who preferred singing in the dark, resulting in the perfect ending sequence as the two matched their talents to harmonise together. Simmons' impressions were brilliantly done, her astonishing voice coming out at the least expected moments to contrast against the shy, 'normal' LV who didn't have the confidence.

The set was very effective, providing neutral tones for the actors to contrast against, particularly those with stronger personalities. I especially enjoyed the tattered, miscellaneous wallpaper that faded out towards the audience. Costume was also very well done - Mari Hoff's theme of slightly-trashy leopard print emphasised the cheapness of her situation, whilst LV's everyday pyjama outfit was significantly out-sparkled by her floor-length evening gown. Also, Billy's diamond chequered sweater vest perfectly matched his endearing charm!

And, of course, the lighting. Softly and subtly done, there were constant lighting changes throughout, aptly representing the mood of the scene. Despite being a tad distracting at times, the many and changing lights were a constant reminder of LV as a little light, sometimes "flickering, fading away", and other times shining as she was meant to do.

A ruptured tale of heartbreak and headache, complete with a dysfunctional mother, untrustworthy men and the chance of romance, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* really does tick all the boxes.

8/10.



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