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## **THE IDES**

**Little Black Box  
Queen Theatre, Playhouse Lane**

Review by Stephanie Johnson

"The Ides" is a teenager's cry from the heart – a scream that reaches out and demands a response.

Anyone who has experienced a difficult passage through adolescence will appreciate this rare insight written by Matthew Clayfield at the age of 17.

This play is a dark, witty and painfully truthful descent into the emotional turmoil that can accompany the anxious passage from childhood to adulthood.

The action is set in a rather bleak high school dressing room. Set constructor Craig Clifford has cleverly conveyed the soulless school décor with a simple black stage and background and a single shabby table.

Director Alyson 'Daisy' Brown has used the space wonderfully encouraging the actor's movement around, over and above the single piece of furniture as well as each other.

Jonathon Wood breathes life and truth into the main character, Fraser. Wood mercurially changes moods, commanding the center of attention on stage and in his peer's lives. At times he is mischievously childlike, at others wise beyond his years and yet he always conveys the fragility of Fraser's emotional world.

Mario Spate is a good foil as his mate Julian. The interchanges between the two young men provide some of the most authentic and truthful.

Claire Dunn plays the promiscuous Chloe with a dash of too much sweetness as opposed to street smarts, but nevertheless provides some lovely moments as the topic of teenage sexuality is explored.

Lori Farmer's natural talent for comedy seems to somehow overshadow the lonely desperation of her character, Katie. As such some of the darker moments go awry whereas the comic scenes are delightful.

Although dark and tumultuous The Ides is not depressing. In fact it is a triumph as it depicts the courage of a young man exposing his vulnerabilities and reaching out for "a little bit of love". Clayfield opens a very private door into an 18-year-old's mind and in doing so, sheds light in some very dark places. This is a clever, quick-witted and yet deeply disturbing account, astounding for a 17-year-old.

The Little Black Box company claims to provide "unique theatrical experiences that engage and stimulate audiences". By bringing Matthew Clayfield's work to life they have certainly succeeded.

See this 50-minute production and stay tuned, hopefully, for more works by this astounding young man.