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Reviewer: Anita Sanders

Rating: 9.0/10

Step in and settle down at the comfortable Odeon Theatre for **Vincent**, an atmospheric dance theatre show directly inspired by the life of Vincent Van Gogh. The work focuses on the relationship Vincent (Tobiah Booth-Remmers) had with his art as well as his supportive brother, Theo (Michael Smith). Rich with emotion, inspiring music and a gorgeous set, this is a very professional and engaging show.

The dance flows with the soft music but still the choreography illustrates Vincent's constant agony and Theo's desperation. This serves as a reminder that mental illness can still exist even when the external world is not in turmoil. The dances are separated by voiceovers that read some of the letters the brothers sent to one another. The direct slice of history, whilst being a reminder that the show is based on truth, is also a welcome confirmation that you are drawing the right conclusions from the dance. This makes the work a perfect entry point for first time dance show attendees and welcoming to a wide age group. Almost all ages can experience the work as only the emotions are explored, not the harm Vincent ravaged his body with.

The relationship between Vincent and Theo is actively blocked by the personification of Vincent's Psyche, played by Chloe Lanham. The creation of this character is a clever choice that not only adds to the representation of mental illness but explains why Theo's support is not enough. Theo, due to the psyche can never get close enough to Vincent and so as I realise that Vincent's and Theo's relationship feels cold, I understand that it is because of Vincent's mental illness and not bad direction.

Two skeletal branch formations are silhouetted in the dark, and further downstage is a stump that's weaved itself into an easel and a desk with twisted branch legs. An appropriate theme that strengthens the visual representation of Vincent's mind – lost in a dark forest with no clear exit. Vincent was thought to have bi-polar and not depression, and so when the skeletal branches change into frames lit in gold light, the other side of his illness becomes visible. The choreography takes its cue from this change; the movements sharpening to intense gestures that chase and seduce Vincent to paint so his mind can clear for a moment. The moment is captivating and shows that set designer Daniel Ampuero has mastered the creation of supportive design.

The lighting design uses a colour palette similar to 'The Starry Night' painting: green, purple and blue. This transports the stage into Vincent's perspective. This is especially effective when the stage's walls are lit up as one of Vincent's line and dot based paintings. The lights make no gesture to which painting he is creating but it is better this way as it emphasizes the freedom Vincent finds when painting. During this sequence the lights are not directly cued by the movement, so flicking and dabbing gestures result in no extra paint on the walls. A missed opportunity that weakens the scene but is not detrimental to the overall work.

Vincent is a striking work that draws in focus through its music, set and lighting design in order to capture the essence of how mental illness torments an individual. The show is a dark journey that sends out the message that Vincent Van Gogh isn't his illness but a brilliant man that society didn't know how to save. If you're tossing up what final Adelaide Fringe show to see, this is it.