

**Bravo Brisbane***CELEBRATING A CREATIVE BRISBANE*

# Freaky Friday // Beenleigh Theatre Group

Anina-Marie / June 23, 2022 /



**Review by Anina-Marie & Kieran J. Evans**

You'll never understand a person until you walk a mile in their shoes. After which you'll be a mile away, and have their shoes.

Beenleigh Theatre's production of Freaky Friday is playing at Crete Street Theatre. Presented with minimal set pieces, a projected backdrop, and a rotating centrepiece to signify changes between home and school, this piece relies heavily on the gumption and chutzpah of the cast. And boy do they deliver in spades! The show's important message of humility, cooperation, and love for family both blood and chosen and the wonderful cast makes this production a must see.

Based on the novel by Mary Rodgers and the Disney films from 1976, 1995, and 2003, this musical comedy premiered in Signature Theatre Arlington in 2016. Freaky Friday is a story of nostalgic whimsy. Katherine Blake and daughter, Ellie, come into stark countenance with each other's realities when they mysteriously change places, switching bodies and lives. Ellie believes her mother can do whatever she wishes, as a grown up, and is eager to be the one to do it better. Suddenly, Ellie has to plan "her own" wedding to her mother's fiancée, Mike, and navigate the job of raising her small impressionable brother, Fletcher. All whilst her mother must go back to high school (gasp) and not tank Ellie's reputation, friendships, or chances with her crush, in the process.



The work, although highly entertaining, deals with some pretty complex and serious issues: both Ellie and Katherine's understanding of themselves and each other, childhood trauma from the loss of a loved one, the meaning of family, and respecting and valuing the differences of others. Interestingly, the antagonists within this piece are themselves in each other's personas. Oh, and that bully, Savannah, out to steal The Hunt from Ellie.

Directed by Sherryl-Lee Secomb, this show is an absolute joy from beginning to end. Sherry-Lee's direction shows a clear passion for both the entertainment value and the deeper messages of this show. The staging is well-thought out and the transitions flow relatively seamlessly.

Steven Days, with the assistance of Ben Richards, provides the excellent Musical Direction for this show. Freaky Friday features some of the most complex, belting vocals Bravo Brisbane has had the pleasure of experiencing. Under Steven and Ben's musical direction, the vocalists deliver some stunning performances. The onstage orchestra, hidden behind a screen at the back, are absolutely amazing. Bravo! Our only qualm is that sometimes the orchestra overwhelms the vocalists making the lyrics a little difficult to discern.



Aesthetically, *Freaky Friday* features some excellent design. The Lighting Design by Donovan Wagner is perfectly on point and flows easily with the action and mood on the stage. The vision content on the projected backdrop created by Bradley Chapman wonderfully subtly supports the show and reinforces key emotions. The Sound Design by Chris Art and Perry Sanders goes off without a hitch.

Clay English's excellent choreography serves the story, works well to the music and supports the action on the stage. Tayla Simpson single handedly designed the amazing costumes for this production and they are fabulous!

This show is expertly carried by two powerful, talented ladies – Carly Wilson and Della Days – as Ellie Blake and Katherine Blake Respectively. Carly Wilson as Ellie Blake juggles the persona of rebellious teenager and harried career mother with immense skill, a fabulous depiction of duality. Carly is a wonderfully talented actor and vocalist who delivers an absolutely sensational performance. Carly's vocals are splendiferous!

As Katherine Blake, Della Days tugs at the heart strings as she pendulums between brisk no-nonsense motherhood to scatterbrained but ultimately loving sister. Della's performance is authentic and spectacular. Her ability to portray the two characters so clearly different is unmatched. Plus, she's an excellent vocalist to boot! Together, Della and Carly are the absolute stars of this show. Their charisma, chemistry and spades of talent make this show a joy to watch.



Samuel Barrett shines in the role of Fletcher Blake; the child who yearns to be seen, heard, and considered a comedian of high standing. Samuel's stunning delivery, including two puppets with unique accents and characteristics is one of the highlights of the show.

Mike Zarate's depiction of the humble, mild-mannered Mike Riley, is sweet and feels authentic. His acting is wonderful, and his singing is excellent. Bravo Brisbane looks forward to seeing him take to the stage again.

AJ Betts delivers a superb portrayal of mean girl, Savannah, that pushes all the right buttons to a satisfying conclusion; a sly and ruthless villain. Her vocal performance is also excellent – easily heard and understood.

Adam, as portrayed by Elliot Gough, is the very model of the teen heartthrob. Fellow characters swoon and scavenge for his time and attention. Elliot's performance is believable in his mannerisms and speech patterns. Not to mention his vocals are on point, which sandwiches his characterisation nicely.



Kristin Sparks and Mae Walker as Gretchen and Hannah respectively showcase the bond between Ellie's best friends spectacularly; in their remarkable display of friendship and camaraderie in the face of unyielding bullying from Savannah and her clique. Kristin and Mae both deliver wonderful, well-rehearsed performances. In the few moments of solo or duo vocals from these two, it is clear that they are both excellent singers.

Torrey, played exquisitely by Liana Hanson, is a hit with the audience from the very beginning. Her command of vocal quality is fabulous and her character development inspires all to take a hard look at their job description and whether they have been overextended. Liana's awkward, comedic timing is hilarious and makes for some of the funniest moments of the show. Bravo, Liana!

A fantastic supporting cast consisting of Jack Barrett-Parker, Nikolai Stewart, Maddi Halvorson, Tash Bass, Priscilla Bernard, Stephen Morris, Liz Brown, Maggie Schafer, Hannah Macri, Tony Odling, Kohen Arstall, Giselle Roe, Ellie James, Arni McCulloch, and Hunter Neville, really brought the stage to life with their colourful depictions of everyday students, coworkers, teachers, merchants, and insipid cops.



This show would not be the success that it is without the wonderful work of these talented supporting cast members who take on a myriad of roles to fill out the world of the show. Some standout performances from the supporting cast include that of Tash Bass as Mrs Luckenbill, Stephen Morris and Liz Brown as Grandpa and Grandma and Priscilla Bernard as Ms Meyers.

Overall, Beenleigh Theatre's Freaky Friday is a spectacular celebration of individuality and an excellent example of the talent in our community. Each and every performer in this production gives 110% and it shows. Bravo!

Freaky Friday runs at Crete Street Theatre until July 2nd. Tickets are on sale [here](https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=826029&) (<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing?eid=826029&>).

## Published by Anina-Marie

[View all posts by Anina-Marie](#)

*[Blog at WordPress.com.](#)*