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# "PLAYS THAT QUICKEN THE PULSE ARE TOO RARE"

Audrey review: Alice Birch's play exhibits a wildness you don't often see in Sydney's pervasively polite theatre scene.

**Show:** Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.

**Company:** House of Sand

**Where:** Old 505 Theatre, Newtown, Sydney

**When:** 2 - 19 May 2018

## **REVOLT. SHE SAID. REVOLT AGAIN.**

**By:** Jason Blake      **Date:** 6 May 2018

**British writer Alice Birch's incendiary act of theatre raises a fist to patriarchal structures and male violence everywhere: in relationships, the workplace, the family, in the words we speak.**

The opening salvo – subtitled “Revolutionise the language (invert it)” – is a comic scene in which a lusty man (played by Richard Hilliar) attempts a verbal seduction. Unmoved by his tone deaf efforts, the woman (Eliza Sanders) takes his language, skews it female and hurls it back.

In the next scene, an offer of marriage (featuring Violette Ayad and Anna Cheney) is brutally deconstructed. In the next, performed by Cheney and Enya Daly, an employee's demand to not work Mondays provokes a spiralling series of counter-offers in defence of the corporate workplace.

Later, another workplace drama, this time a kangaroo court of supermarket managers (Hilliar and Moreblessing Maturure, at first) who interrogate, then fat-shame a woman found sprawled semi-naked among smashed watermelons in aisle 7.

The woman (Daly) counters with a searing riposte to the omnipresent threat of sexual violence and porn culture:

“Lie down and become available. Constantly. Want to be entered. Constantly. It cannot be an Invasion, if you want it. They Cannot Invade if you Want It. Open your legs and throw your dress over your head, pull your knickers down and want it and they can invade you no longer.”

So it goes, with each scene darker and more chaotic than the one preceding it.

Plays that quicken the pulse are too rare, and *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* certainly does that. It never quite feels truly dangerous or unruly, but this production, directed by Charles Sanders for the independent company House of Sand, exhibits a wild side you don't often see in Sydney's pervasively polite theatre scene.

It's messy (watermelon, everywhere), compelling and the performances are strong. Birch gives every member of the cast a spotlight moment (one of the more conventional elements of the play) and all rise to the occasion here, especially Cheney as the frazzled boss, Daly as the supermarket protester, and actor-dancer Eliza Sanders in a variety of roles.

*Jason Blake*

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