



Photo: Elaine Syron. The Birth of Bangarra (posters for sale: www.blackfellasdreaming.com.au)

FIRE – A RETROSPECTIVE

Bangarra's 20 Year Anniversary Gala Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House

August 28 to September 26

Saturday, September 26 at the Sydney Opera House. Exclusive Gala tickets at \$120 pp includes a Gala Performance of FIRE – A RETROSPECTIVE, a talk from Artistic Director Stephen Page, and a Post-Show Reception of canapés and cocktails on the Northern Boardwalk Marquee of the Sydney Opera House with the dancers. Tickets: Sydney Opera House Box Office.



The cast of Avenue Q. Photo: Supplied

X-rated puppets and sensitive issues

MICHAEL SLEZAK

You get the feeling when watching Avenue Q that everyone is getting a real kick out of watching cute puppets swear and have sex. And why shouldn't they? It's bloody hilarious.

But if that was all this show had going for it, I wouldn't tell you to see it. Peter Jackson did that and much more 20 years ago with his seriously disturbing *Meet The Feebles*.

Luckily, *Avenue Q* packs in, alongside the X-rated puppet action, wonderfully enjoyable songs and some astoundingly good performances.

The story follows eight characters (people and puppets) living in a friendly, downmarket part of New York City. Each is troubled by the pressures of modern life. These pressures, such as finding a "purpose", a partner, a career, love, and generally fitting in, provide the backdrop to the show's dark but unusually

uplifting satire.

Perhaps most surprisingly, *Avenue Q's* puppets provide a sensitive treatment of a number of social and political issues – all without sacrificing a laugh. Sexuality, poverty, race, and depression are just some of the serious themes of the play.

The song, 'Everyone's A Little Bit Racist', might be one small exception to the generally sensitive handling of serious issues. On the one hand the song makes the valid point that a lot of people are racist even

when they think they are not. Kate Monster sings: "No one's really colour blind/ Maybe it's a fact we all should face/ Everyone makes judgments based on race."

But on the other hand the song implies that it's okay to be racist when Kate sings: "Ethnic jokes might be uncouth but you laugh because they're based on truth/ Don't take them as personal attacks/ Everyone enjoys them so relax!"

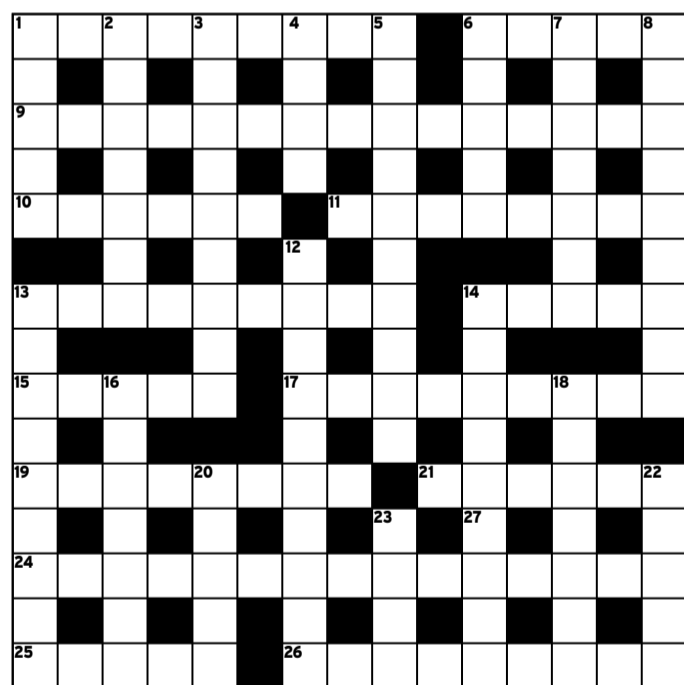
It feels a little too obvious to say that *Avenue Q* is *Sesame Street* for adults. The title alludes to the children's television classic, and several characters seem close relatives of Jim Henson's Muppets.

Ernie and Bert are clearly the inspiration for Rod and Nicky, two fabulous male characters who live together in twin beds and which provide the fodder for one of the most entertaining songs of the show: 'If You Were Gay (That'd Be OK).'

Moreover, it would be only partly true to describe *Avenue Q* as *Sesame Street* for adults. Many of the jokes are unashamedly juvenile and perhaps well suited for older children.

But letting loose for an evening and laughing at jokes that many theatre-goers would be too "sophisticated" to tell themselves is enormous fun, and I suspect, good for the soul.

South Sydney Crossword



First correct entry received by Sept 30th will win a mystery prize. Send completed puzzle to: South Sydney Herald Crossword PO Box 2360 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

Crossword by D.P.

ACROSS

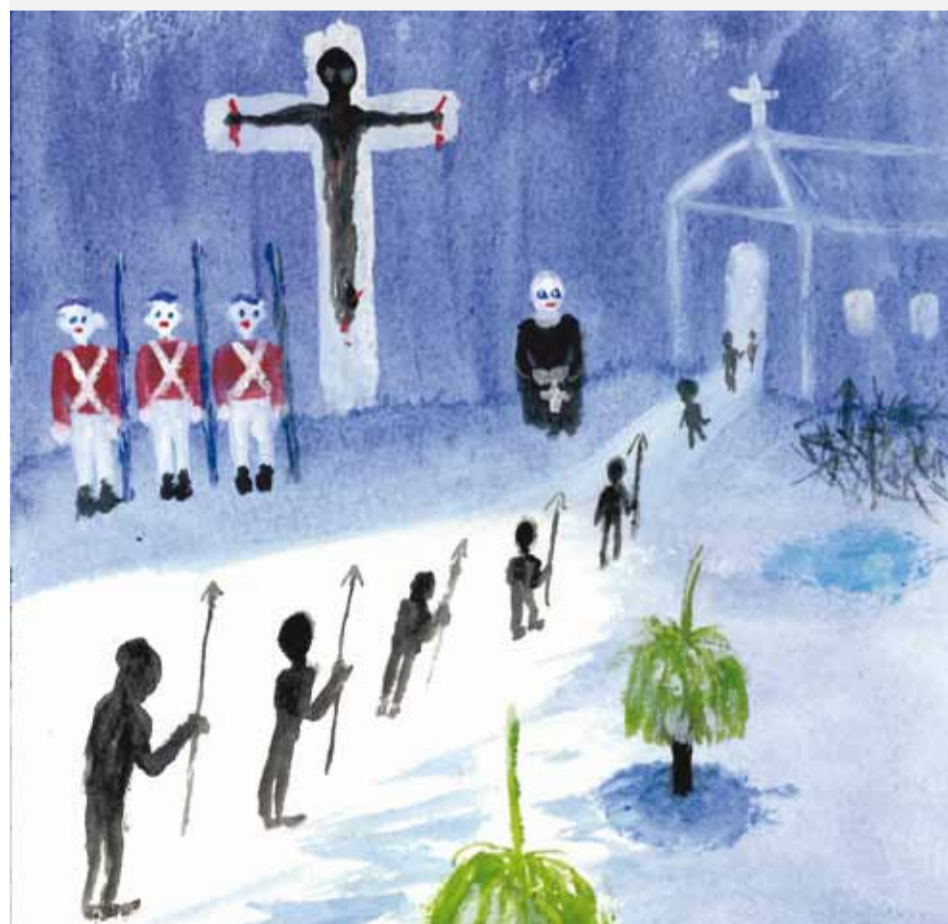
- 1) Fast hothead elicits deep sigh (4-5)
- 6) Peel b-back elongated pip (5)
- 9) Metaphorically meteorologically low (5,3,7)
- 10) Its let out of dirty singlet on the line (6)
- 11) Raise Cain amid lama's dilemma of madness (8)
- 13) A description of some number (9)
- 14) Nuts and ... streaks of lightening (5)
- 15) Cute little Rabbitoh! (5)
- 17) We've Adam's conundrum (3,3,3)
- 19) Boot in return for a slice of the pie (8)
- 21) Shipboard murder shows expertise (6)
- 24) Peak exuberance (2,3,2,3,5)
- 25) Incessant as inferno (2,3)
- 26) Green lady may be mystical (9)

DOWN

- 1) Badger like a dog (5)
- 2) Yddig? Come on! (5-2)
- 3) Peculiarly misspelt gernalyst (9)
- 4) Hello hello! What's this? (4)
- 5) Needing a lift (4,2,4)
- 6) Dreamtime spirit of botany distinguished in Redfern Park (5)
- 7) Moral disturbance of the laic (7)
- 8) Rewritten plays read as powerless (9)
- 12) Cruel Lucifer hides behind regular surname (10)
- 13) In the dark awkwardly bunkering down after grid outage (9)
- 14) All Blacks wannabe holding iconic Ozzie bird (5,4)
- 16) Nike etc. don't usually make this apparel (7)
- 18) Raise air alarm, rout disease (7)
- 20) Bizarrely shaped on the outside having two feet (5)
- 22) Alas Gladys doesn't begin reforming (5)
- 23) Best hugger has an unlikely central character (4)

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