

*Daisy
moon
was born
this way*

EMILY SHEEHAN



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INTRODUCTION

Emily Sheehan captures the voice of young people arguably better than any other Australian playwright. Her play, *Hell's Canyon*, knocked my socks off with its ability to capture the spikiness and vulnerability of young people growing into themselves and into the inhospitable landscape of adulthood.

Like that play, *Daisy Moon* beautifully expresses the place where childhood dances into adulthood, one foot forward, two steps back. The power of the child's imagination to create comfort, optimism, resilience and healing in the face of time's brutal introductions is powerfully evoked. So too is the simultaneous terror in and yearning for leaving childish ways.

Emily's characters can be crude, colloquial and petulant. And yet they are always softened by their unwillingness to jettison everything they spring from, despite their professed longing to escape. Their sense of alienation is defeated by their inability to switch off their private tenderness. They encapsulate the longing of youth to outgrow it, but there is always a subtle resistance or distrust in the need for adulthood's false certainties.

In both *Hell's Canyon* and *Daisy Moon*, is the unidentified character of Grief. In *Hell's Canyon*, it is explicit in the plot. In *Daisy Moon*, Emily has rendered it more opaque, like a cloud of feeling that washes over the characters in different ways, infusing them with suffering. As in the earlier play, they know that to graduate from childhood is to find—perhaps with difficulty—the strength to face life head-on.

Emily writes vibrant naturalistic dialogue that transports the reader or audience immediately into the world of the play. But she is also drawn to representing the inner worlds that sustain her characters and allow them respite from the 'real' world. This makes her places deft literary rendezvous between naturalism and fantasy which creates a profoundly affecting humanity.

It's a joy to read another play of Emily's which demonstrates that the inheritors of the Australian stage are respectful of the traditional text-based story-driven theatre that audiences want, but also utterly unique

in using powerful theatrical devices that are emotionally authentic rather than sensational.

Daisy Moon is another beautiful work of Emily's, with her characteristic grasp of the subtleties of young people finding their way.

Emily gives younger audiences a chance to see their own metaphysical dramas realised vividly on stage. For older audiences, she reminds us of when the past and the future collided in a fragile but wondrous present that did not quite belong to either realm. This ability to engage the sensibilities of a wide audience is testament to her power, skill and humanity as a writer.

Joanna Murray-Smith
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Joanna Murray-Smith is a Melbourne playwright, screenwriter and novelist.