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Chris Thomas

- *SMS Mess*

One Act Play – Comedy, monologue

Running Time: approx. 20 minutes

Period: Now

Warnings: Contains Some Offensive Language : MA+

Synopsis:

SMS Mess is a short, one-woman show that explores the pitfalls of text messaging. Using comedy to highlight what happens when text messaging goes wrong, the play is about Kate's journey of realisation as she finds there is perhaps a better way to communicate when playing the dating game. *SMS Mess* is ideal for an actress who is looking to showcase herself with a quirky monologue. It requires only a few props and a minimal set.

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About the Playwright: Chris Thomas



Born in Perth, Western Australia, Chris Thomas is a writer, actor, journalist and broadcaster who has developed diverse experience in these areas over several years.

He has many eclectic acting credits to his name and broad journalistic experience, working for mainstream newspapers, independent publications and freelancing for numerous titles, as well as extensive work in media relations and flexing his dulcet tones as a radio announcer.

Chris Thomas is also the author of the novel *Journo's Diary*, the *Doctor Who* short story *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* and the plays *Which One?*, *Reality Matters*, *Appetite for Destruction*, *The Bonza Land of Oz*, *King Bling* and *SMS Mess*.

Which One? received an encouragement award for writing at the 1994 Bunbury One-Act Drama Festival. Chris himself has received numerous accolades including an Excellence in Performance Award at the 2001 South West Drama Festival for his role in *Disposal* and Best Male Supporting Actor at the 2008 South West Drama Festival for his role in *The Return*.

About the Play:

SMS Mess was first performed during the Perth Institute of Contemporary Art's annual Putting on an Act Festival in July, 2008, featuring Julia Dalby in the lead role of Kate, and was ultimately selected for the best-of showcase at the end of the season. After receiving outstanding reviews, it was then performed at KADS Theatre in August and September, as part of the 2008 one-act play season, receiving further acclaim.

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SMS MESS

By Chris Thomas © 2008

CHARACTER:

KATE : *age can range from early to late 20s to mid-30s, attractive but has self-image problems about her weight. She's totally caught up in the world of her mobile phone and text messaging as she tries to find the right guy, communicating mainly through SMS going back and forth.*

[Kate walks into position. Stage is in darkness. **Cue sound effect of text message received on mobile phone.** Lights come up on KATE. She turns around, reading the text message on her phone. Concentrating, she then looks up and speaks]

KATE: What the fuck? (*looks around*) Sorry. But you wouldn't believe the message I just received. (*tut-tuts, paces a little*) Jeez, that pisses me off. (*looks at message again, she reads*) "Hi Kate, enjoyed last night but don't think we're really suited. All the best, stay in touch." (*shakes head*) What the hell did I do wrong? Am I too fat? Too loud? I thought we were having a good time. Why bother texting at all if he's not interested? Bastard. (PAUSE) Was he just pretending to be nice when we were out? Doesn't even have the balls to call me. I'll fix him. Yeah, that's right (*strong, out to audience, shakes phone in her hand, as if she's going to call him*). I'll text him back.

[KATE texts message quickly, then reads out what she has written]

"Dear Brad, sorry I'm such a disappointment. If you grew some balls, I might be slightly interested." Hmmph! And send! (*she presses the button with passion, then immediately regrets it*). (PAUSE) Oh shit, maybe I shouldn't have sent that. Why don't these things have cancel buttons? Oh well. (*laughs to self*). Can't do much about it now.

My name's Kate. I'm not a supermodel but I don't think I'm hideously ugly either. Just an average girl living her life and looking for something more at the same time. I'm single but I seem to be finding men in all the wrong places. Usually at the end of all the texts on my phone (*shakes head*). I don't know how it all became tit for tat text. People used to actually call each other. (*slight change of tack as her thought changes gear*) But that's just the way it is these days. The dating game. It's probably one of the stupidest games around. There just doesn't seem to be anyway you can win. Well, some people seem to – but Kate never does. Oh, there are guys who lust after me but I don't wannabe just a cheap root for them. You know, a notch on their belt or whatever. I want them to want me and be with me. Is that too much to ask? (***the thought lingers in the air and the text message sound goes off***)

Oh, frick, I bet that's Brad. I don't wanna know what he sent back, I should just delete the message. But human nature's not like that, is it? You can't help but look. (KATE looks at phone, presses button. Reads and then sighs). Should have expected that. But he really upset me before.

(KATE reads): “Kate, I don’t know why you seem so vicious when I was polite. Get over yourself. Don’t contact me again.”

He got what he wanted then. Doesn’t have to worry about dealing with me any more. (PAUSE) Hang on – maybe that’s what he wanted to do? Trick me into sending a response like that so he can fob me off forever and not feel guilty about being a prick? (KATE is quiet for a moment, a little hurt) Fuckin’ asshole.

[Lights blackout. A beat or two passes. Lights fade up; some time has passed for KATE. She seems somewhat cheerier]

KATE: Oh hey there. Yeah, I know it’s been a while. But I started seeing this great new guy. What’s that? Oh Brad. Yeah, I’m way over that. I’m so glad that never happened. Otherwise I wouldn’t have met Dan. Or “Dan the man” as everyone calls him. Dan, MY man. I’m careful about getting my hopes up too much but it’s going well. (Phone beeps with text message sound). Sorry....got a text. Ooh, it’s him!

(She reads out the message) “Hey gorgeous, what you up to? You wanna catch up later? Kiss kiss.”

Awwwww! Seems to be good, doesn’t it? (PAUSE) Doesn’t it? (looks away, then turns back) Okay! I’ve got a few doubts! But who hasn’t? Is he the right guy? Can I see myself with him in the future? He treats me like a princess, he’s a nice bloke... yet I can’t help wondering... if there isn’t something more out there. I get wracked with guilt because there are so many people worse off, who never even find someone to love. (frenetic and insecure) What’s wrong with second best? If you win silver in the Olympics, it’s not like you’ve done badly, is it? (shakes her head, paces more) Honestly, maybe us girls just think too much. Life’s hard enough, we should probably just get on with it.

(Phone message sound. KATE reads it) “Hey babe, you haven’t responded. Everything OK? Miss you. Kiss kiss.”

**This is not the end of “SMS Mess”
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PICA sends an SMS 2 d wrld

Most people would agree that the text message has usurped the telephone, and practically overtaken conversation, as our primary form of conversation.

The Age of SMS brings with it, however, certain downsides. Who hasn't accidentally sent a private text message to the wrong person, for example? Or sat in eerie silence on a train full of texting teenagers studiously avoiding eye contact with their fellow travellers?

The trials and tribulations of text messaging come under scrutiny in Chris Thomas' *SMS Mess*, part of this year's *Putting on an Act* festival of short performances at PICA.

Thomas has a 15-year background in local theatre, appearing on stage in productions ranging from *Amadeus* and *Chicago* to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

With *SMS Mess*, he has come up with a one-woman show mixing comedy with a timely look at the perils of modern technology. Julia Dalby plays Kate, a young woman in the throes of a nasty break-up conducted entirely through the medium of the text message.

"The whole thing was inspired just



Wired: Julia Dalby in *SMS Mess*.

by observing people stopping mid-track in conversation with someone to send a text to someone else and me wondering why they don't just call the person," Thomas laughs. "People seem to live and breathe

their life via text messages, almost having entire relationships that way."

Kate's misery is compounded after a drunken evening in a nightclub, in which she accidentally sends a sexy text to everyone in her address book.

As Thomas points out, text messaging can be convenient but it can also push people apart rather than bring them closer together.

"We keep finding ways of isolating ourselves, from actually talking to people, whether it's via email, text messages, Facebook or MySpace," he says.

Putting on an Act was first devised in 1994 to give WA performers and writers a chance to showcase sharp, challenging works clocking in at 15 minutes or under.

Performances can range across a variety of genres, from physical theatre to contemporary dance, experimental music or live art.

SMS Mess is on July 23 alongside eight other works, including performances by *Urban Moves* and *Kompany Kido*. The full *Putting on an Act* season runs from July 22-26.

Full program and bookings at www.pica.org.au

SMS MESS

Many would relate to mistakenly sending a text message to someone, a theme explored in the world debut of *SMS Mess* by Chris Thomas at PICA on Wednesday, July 23. Part of the annual *Putting on an Act* short-performance festival at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts from July 22 to 26, Thomas' script explores the trials and tribulations of text messaging. Bookings can be made by calling 9228 6300 or by visiting pica.org.au.



SMS Mess

The West Australian 9th July 2008

Xpress Magazine 10 July 2008



Connecting are writer Chris Thomas and actress Julia Dalby.

Message in 15 minutes

SMS Mess, a new play by City of Fremantle media relations officer Chris Thomas, will have its world debut on July 23 at the *Putting on an Act* short performance festival.

The festival was developed as an opportunity for WA performers and writers to showcase their talents in plays restricted to 15 minutes each.

Thomas said he wanted to come up with a script that mixed comedy with a pointed look at the perils of modern technology.

"The theme for *SMS Mess* came from observations of people who seemingly live and breathe their

life via text messages, almost having entire relationships that way," he said.

Julia Dalby, who has been cast as the main character Kate, said she was looking forward to the challenge of performing the play's long monologues.

"I was attracted to the script because it made me laugh and I strongly identified with Kate's hatred of technology," she said.

SMS Mess is one of several pieces performed tonight at 8pm at the Perth Cultural Centre. Bookings on 9228 6300.

Fremantle Gazette 22 July 2008

LOL at perils of SMS life



Writer Chris Thomas with actor Julia Dalby.

THE follies of living in a text messaging society will be depicted in a play at KADS Theatre in August and September.

SMS Mess will play as part of KADS annual one-act play season.

Written and directed by former Lesmurdie Senior High School student Chris Thomas, the play explores the trials and tribulations of text messaging.

The one-woman show will highlight the perils of modern technology using a mix of comedy.

The play premiered as part of the annual *Putting on an Act* short-performance festival at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts and was chosen by judges as a showcase piece.

SMS Mess will accompany *Free Coffee for the Driver* and *The Return* at KADS Theatre from August 29.

Hills Gazette 23 August 2008

SEE IT | DO IT | HEAR IT | LIVE IT

It's an SMS Mess for Kate

One-woman show a first for actor

By **NICOLE HEINRICH**

WHEN it comes to stage roles, former St Norbert College student Julia Dalby has tackled everything from an opium-addicted prostitute to Count Orsini-Rosenberg.

Now she is taking to the stage alone in her first one-woman show.

She will perform the world debut of *SMS Mess* at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, part of the annual Putting on an Act short-performance festival from July 22 to 26.

Devised in 1994, Putting on an Act allows WA performers and writers to produce short, sharp and challenging works, restricted to 15 minutes. Perth writer and thespian Chris Thomas came up with *SMS Mess*, mixing comedy with a pointed look at the perils of modern technology.

Dalby was attracted to the script because it made her laugh and she strongly identified with the character's hatred of computers and mobile phones.

"It's also a challenge because I've never done a one-woman show before or even a monologue this long," she said.

"My character, Kate, has a whiff of desperation about her, coupled with a fear of intimacy and commitment. She wants a fairly uncomplicated, unchallenging life and is a bit insecure and needy."

Writer Thomas knew the role of Kate needed an actress who could deliver plenty of sassy and feisty moments but also display a vulnerable side. "The theme for *SMS Mess* came from observations of people who seemingly live and breathe their life via text messages, almost having entire relationships that way," he said.

Ms Dalby has an impressive list of stage credits to her name, including award-winning roles in *The Lesson* and *Two Women and a Chair*.

SMS Mess is one of several pieces on stage from 8pm, Wednesday, July 23, as part of Putting on an Act. Tickets are \$18 or \$15 concession and people can book by calling 9228 6300 or going to www.pica.org.au.



Julia Dalby, getting into the role of Kate in *SMS Mess*.

Canning Times 15 July 2008



Julia Dalby as 'Kate'



