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# Small but perfectly formed theatre gem

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STAGE hits come in all shapes and sizes. And sometimes the smallest-scale shows, like the currently touring *Statespeare* and *Untrained*, offer the biggest delights for audiences.

A bald description of the subject matter of the two works certainly doesn't indicate why they have been playing to big audiences around Australia and, in *Untrained's* case, overseas.

*Statespeare* shows four high school year 12 students - two theatre nerds and two cool kids who find plays a bore - thrown together to choose and rehearse an excerpt from Shakespeare's works and explain its relevance to a contemporary audience.

*Untrained* also features an unlikely team, with two experienced male dancers and two who have no dance training attempting to do the same choreographic manoeuvres. The instructions for the quartet aren't given to them until they are on stage.

*Statespeare* was developed by Shake and Stir Theatre, a Brisbane company that was established in 2006 to tour shows to Queensland schools, with Shakespeare as a key [element of its programs](#).

*Statespeare* premiered under the auspices of Brisbane's La Boite Theatre in 2009 and was so popular that La Boite artistic director David Berthold included a revised version in the theatre's subscription series this year. [CD-ROM](#)

It played to packed houses in the group's 350-seat venue, then began a four-month national tour last week.

Newcastle's Playhouse will host the show from May 25 to 28.

*Untrained* was devised by leading Australian contemporary dance choreographer Lucy Guerin and premiered in Melbourne in 2009. The show was such a critical and audience hit that it was invited to a festival in Hong Kong.

It has just begun a three-month tour, with a Newcastle Playhouse season on June 1 and 2.

Next year, *Untrained* will tour the United States, after the artistic director of Brooklyn's Academy of Music saw the show at Sydney Opera House and offered Guerin a season at his theatre.

*Statespeare* has performances at the Playhouse on Wednesday, May 25, at 12.30pm and 8pm, Thursday and Friday, May 26 and 27, at 10am and 12.30pm, and Saturday, May 28, at 2pm. Tickets: \$35, concession \$30.

*Untrained* can be seen on Wednesday and Thursday, June 1 and 2, at 8pm. Adult \$40, concession \$35. Book through Civic Ticketel 4929 1977.

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