

## Babushka in Happily Ever After – Combined Reviews

Scenestr – Elodie Boal – Dec 4, 2018

[http://scenestr.com.au/arts/happily-ever-after-brisbane-review-wonderland-festival-2018-20181204?fbclid=IwAR30UK\\_9N5xItNUVf\\_FeVm53w0Gi5ulAodNv1\\_yUe9vEUj3BwiX66qROun8](http://scenestr.com.au/arts/happily-ever-after-brisbane-review-wonderland-festival-2018-20181204?fbclid=IwAR30UK_9N5xItNUVf_FeVm53w0Gi5ulAodNv1_yUe9vEUj3BwiX66qROun8)

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## Happily Ever After Brisbane Review @ Wonderland Festival 2018

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'Happily Ever After'

***Venturing deep into the world of fairytales, Babushka are back to present a magical evening of entertainment.***

In their latest show 'Happily Ever After', the polished cabaret princesses performed a medley of enchanting music mash-ups, which included stories of royals, fictitious lands and magical beings.

Fracturing our favourite tales, Babushka revitalised stories we've grown up with –successfully invigorating them with modern and contemporary twists. In 'Happily Ever After', every princess was accounted for and they all had something new to say.

Featuring the vocal stylings of Alicia Cush, Judy Hainsworth and Bethan Ellsmore, Babushka has really established a solid reputation for itself. Complete with captivating harmonies and group synchronicity, the cabaret collective was tight, professional and extremely enthralling.

'Happily Ever After' follows the same standard of Babushka's earlier work, 'Doll' and 'I Can Keep A Secret'. The ladies embodied their heroines from head to toe – with precise comical timing, beautiful costumes and engaging acting abilities.

The divas successfully charmed the many townfolk of Brisbane and proved they are one of the best

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comedy acts in our Kingdom.

Singing covers from the Eurythmics, Lorde, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Sam the Sham, Kurt Weill and everything in between, the evening was jam-packed with music for all ages. 'Happily Ever After' turned classic bedtime stories on their heads and embraced European influences for a night that kept slaying tune after tune.

The group was also accompanied by the incredible pianist, Luke Volker, who was equal in sass and energetic playing for many scene-stealing moments. Babushka's sound was completed with an accordion, a violin, percussion instruments and even kazoos.

'Happily Ever After' was a spectacle that kept on giving. There were props pulled from baskets, petal reveals and some surprise gangster rapping. The show had so many wonderful elements to it – a perfect amount of ingredients had been selected to cast the right spell on audience members.

One magical moment that stood out, was the combination of two unlikely hits - 'Enter Sandman' (by Metallica) and 'Mr Sandman' (originally performed by The Chordettes) – making for a dark, demented and truly wicked concoction. The group left the audience wanting more; even performing a surprise encore of the apt hit 'Babooshka' by Kate Bush.

As Queens of their industry, it was no surprise Babushka would hit the right notes. Their vocal abilities are flawless, their compositions are catchy, and their personalities are just so darn loveable.

From arguably Brisbane's best cabaret group, 'Happily Ever After' is a hit show that needs to be seen.

### **Blue Curtains Brisbane – Meredith Walker – Dec 1, 2018**

[https://bluecurtainsbris.wordpress.com/2018/12/01/familiar-fables-reframed/?fbclid=IwAR0Od\\_KuHSR2gVLVH0OfghFTzkheRFMO-i5SAAWpHQHFP8DD0-BZdiUp8Pg](https://bluecurtainsbris.wordpress.com/2018/12/01/familiar-fables-reframed/?fbclid=IwAR0Od_KuHSR2gVLVH0OfghFTzkheRFMO-i5SAAWpHQHFP8DD0-BZdiUp8Pg)

## **Familiar fables reframed**

Happily Ever After (Little Match Productions in partnership with Brisbane Powerhouse)  
Brisbane Powerhouse, Visy Theatre  
November 29 – December 1



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Straight from a sold-out Queensland tour, the three talented princess of Babushka are back in the magical land of Brisbane to turn your favourite bedtime stories inside out as, along with their trusty companion Sir Luke-a-lot (Luke Volger) on piano, the trio bring their own brand of fairy tale to the fabled kingdom of New Farm with “Happily Ever After”.



As with the group’s earlier “Doll”, there is an immediate appeal to the show’s colour and infectious energy, enhanced by the performers animated and over-the-top characterisations. The divas’ princess personas are clear from the start with their costume nods to Snow White (Alicia Cush), Rapunzel (Judy Hainsworth) and Red Riding Hood (Bethan Ellsmore).



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While each princess performer is given individual opportunities to shine, the most magnificent moments are actually where their talents combine. The harmonious voices of the three performers and co-creators meld melodically in, for example, Lorde's 'Royals' and Eurythmics' 'Sweet Dreams', the latter also featuring violin accompaniment from Ellsmore.

In true Babushka style, there is more to "Happily Ever After" than there first may appear. There is a theme of female empowerment at the core of its fable reframes for modern maidens, perfectly tempered to be neither too in-your-face or too subtle to succeed, but in true fairy-tale fashion, just right in placement and plentifulness. What also makes Babushka so special is their unique reappropriation of familiar songs for new thematic purposes. Hainsworth's tale of a down and dirty Cinderella to Rihanna's 'Umbrella', for example, is an appreciated audience favourite, full of humour. And their reinvigoration of old-school song mashup of Madonna and Duran Duran is inspired.

With their magical maestro in skilful musical support, the group presents songs in ways that allow for different lyric interpretation and appreciation, which makes for a dynamic cabaret experience. Full of fun one minute and darkly seductive the next, "Happily Ever After" cleverly takes audiences from Britney to Metallica in its inside out turn of childhood favourites. The result is not only musically accomplished but wickedly funny.

### The Creative Issue – Paige Duffy – Dec 2, 2018

<https://www.thecreativeissue.com.au/happily-ever-after-a-cabaret-delight/?fbclid=IwAR2eB-eOrRIYpav47tMj8VvJD-fMQ3rGCtq24QcDwh4PiXdM3kLVM49ZHQ>

# Happily Ever After: A Cabaret Delight

The Babushka ensemble presents their brand new show, *Happily Ever After*, as part of Wonderland festival 2019.

Performed in Brisbane Powerhouse's Visy theatre, *Happily Ever After*, with its the three talented vocalists and fantastic pianist, have the audience spellbound from the dimming of the lights to the applause at the end. The performers, with their quick-witted banter and enchanting musical arrangements, are skilled at engaging the audience, bringing them into the unfolding fairytale on stage as King, Queen, drunkard, and, of course, peasants.

The stage is set beautifully, indicative of the fairytale plots to follow, with enchanting roses, a star-lit wall, and cut-out wolves that come alive with the howling of the three vocalists. As the lights dim, our three princesses, Alisha, Bethen, and Judy, along with their pianist, Sir Luke-a-lot, enter the space and rapidly fill the theatre with live music. Along with the voices of princesses Alisha, Bethen, and Judy and the confident tinkling of Sir Luke-a-lot's ivories, audiences are treated to Bethen's violin, Alisha's accordion, and Judy's various percussion instruments. The musical talent of each performer is enchanting in its self.

Through music, *Happily Ever After* tells the story of today's modern princesses, the ones that Disney had no care for. There's a princess, longing for true love, who meets a man, falls in love, marries... and divorces two years later. Or the princess who, despite her father's strict ruling and with being grounded each and every night, still finds a way to party late and wake up with red wine stains on her shirt and the smell of Cuban cigars lingering through her hair (or rather, Passion Pop and Durry's). And, of course, the "evil" queen, who fears her beauty is fading.

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Babushka's *Happily Ever After* is a delightful hour of live entertainment and contemporary love stories that any princess, prince, King, or Queen can relate to, regardless of whether you're seeking a duke or duchess for yourself. And if you're still unsure if this magical cabaret is for you, just wait until you hear Britney Spear's *Toxic*: a truly mesmerising experience.

### Creative Futures – Catherine Lawrence – Dec 2, 2018

[https://creativefutures.online/reviews/2018/12/2/review-happily-ever-after?fbclid=IwAR2H30FEDyYrLs5qn4FAnuiBole1lpIDRd3M\\_yygc9\\_yDa9YyQlwzUgC\\_0k](https://creativefutures.online/reviews/2018/12/2/review-happily-ever-after?fbclid=IwAR2H30FEDyYrLs5qn4FAnuiBole1lpIDRd3M_yygc9_yDa9YyQlwzUgC_0k)

Conjuring their inner Rapunzel/Goldilocks (Judy Hainsworth), wicked step-mother/Queen (Alicia Cush), and Little Red Riding Hood (Bethan Ellsmore), the three Babushka divas have concocted a delightfully-distorted and ever-so entertaining reworking of many well-known fairy tales. Hats off to the performers, and to Penny Challen, designer and co-director of Little Match Productions. Think popular music, inverted and re-worked with different musical styles, add in a sparkle of fantastic styling, and tie it all together with humorous dialogue from a highly-professional team. Or what Cush described as “musical mashups, quirky humour and simple choreography”. It works. And don't just take my word for it. This was one of the few cabaret shows I've been to where the evening ended with a standing ovation.

Fairy tales are cautionary myths. In *Happily Ever After* many of our favourite stories (and songs) are reinterpreted and postmodernised with great style. Twisting everything from the Snow White & Seven Dwarfs' *I'm Wishing* ('the story of the girl who swiped right') through to the audience-pleasing *Umbrella* ('Dirty Little Cinderella') Babushka's mashups had us all captivated. The talented Luke Volker (Musical Director, 'narrator' & Piano) introduced each chapter (or song) of their anthology of fairy tales, all were reinvigorated into what Volker referred to as “marvellous morals for modern maidens.”

If opera isn't really your 'thing', don't be put off by description of operatic skills. Cush, Hainsworth and Ellsmore are three talented divas with fantastic voices. Not only can they produce some stunning close harmonies, but they also add to the musical diversity of the evening with piano accordion, kazoo, violin, triangle and drum. And they selected an eclectic collection of material, twisting and transforming songs that spanned many decades.

Favourite moments? Ellsmore's princess and the pea references had the audience in fits, Cush was absolutely compelling with her reflections of a bitter queen ('I'll put a spell on you' tango, sung to the apple, of course). And I'd happily buy a copy of the Babushka re-working of Lorde's *Royals* (great performance by Hainsworth, but also for the memories of the disdainful triangle-playing by Cush). Certain songs just lend themselves to this show of twisted fairy-tales—memorably *Umbrella* and the *Hungry Like a Wolf/Like a Virgin* medley (for the vocals, and for Hainsworth's performances). If you only go to see one cabaret, make it a Babushka show like this (and ideally one that includes their performance of *Sweet Dreams are Made of This*).

The 'peasants' from the 'Fabled Kingdom of New Farm' had a ball. All too soon it was time for *Mr Sandman* to send us on our way, after a deserved standing-ovation. I'll certainly be following Little Match on 'fairybook' for details of future shows. And looking out for the 2019 Wonderland Festival program.

**Verdict:** Standing ovations all round. Look out for future Little Match Productions. You'll be enthralled, enchanted and entertained.