

/A.DICK.TED/

Or, Learning to Breathe Underwater; a ritual of lemons




Okay, it's also known as, *I Love You, I Hate You, Shut Up & Tell Me Everything!* [A mostly-true entirely-honest tale of recovery]. This is billed as a solo punk rock epic poem, written and performed by **Teddy Lytle** and directed by **Harmon dot aut**. At first glance you might think this is a cute show with an older boy and his toys, parading around the stage in his pajamas like a madman. That's before Wilbury veteran Lytle, a force to be reckoned with, literally opens his brain to expose his various addictions and vulnerability. It is raw to the core, and maybe cathartic. Says Lytle, "I'm not sharing my story to blame anyone, or educate people, or try to help anyone. It's a selfish act. This is *my story*. And I survived it. This is my way of reclaiming my life."

This is not the first time Lytle has run this show. Each time it's resurrected, changes are made to reflect Lytle's current state of being. This rendition evolved much like the others. "Redirected, trimmed, corrected, never perfect, always better," says Lytle. He goes on to explain, "Performative inclusion, particularly in mental health, kills people. That is not hyperbole. It felt like a traditional career in the arts, or in entertainment was out of my reach. I felt excluded. My home was the theatre for my whole life and however misguided I was, it seemed to me I had lost that. When I had nothing, I really found my recovery, and in that, I found community."

This one-hour monologue demonstrates some of Lytle's musical talents and includes several of Lytle's provocative songs, sung along to his guitar. We are often referred to a video backdrop of super heroes, his inspirational grandfather affected by Alzheimer's, his mug shots and several applicable thought-provoking quotes. Lighting design by **Max Ponticelli** darkens along with the mood two-thirds of the way in, and addiction is explained so vividly you want Lytle to stop making sense. Sobs in the audience leave you wondering if these are affected family members or just your average compassionate viewers. Doesn't matter, as we can all see someone we know in this sometimes funny, sometimes very poignant

depiction of what happens when you mix a host of dependencies with ADHD and the ensuing lunacy of a self-medicated addictive OCD personality. Yeah. Bring tissues.

From her small desk, partner and guardian angel **Bay McCulloch** sports angelic wings, onesie PJs of her own plus blingy boots, serving as Lytle's inspiration to keep him on track each time his ADHD takes him astray. She is his sensibility, his muse, his guiding and grounding force. Toward the end of the show, Lytle impressively adlibs answers to all questions posed to the audience right before the show: *Ask a question you've always been too afraid to ask and/or confess a secret you swore you'd take to your grave.* As McCulloch systematically hands him the pre-collected notes from a fishbowl, his in-stride impromptu answers are as funny as they are genuine.



Teddy Lytle comes clean with his addictions as guardian angel Bay McCulloch stands by him.

Therapist **Vanessa Cubellis**, LMHC, was on hand for a "talk back" opening night, answering questions on mental health and substance abuse. Thank you, Teddy Lytle, for totally exposing yourself (well, the tighty-whities stayed on), splitting the atom and leaving no sin unturned. We are happy to learn you are employing many techniques and practices to manage and work with your issues while sharing these extremely personal skeletons with us, and for offering the following helpful link for others with addiction issues: Link to help:

<https://mhari.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Bridging-the-Divide-Ebook.pdf>

Wilbury Theatre Group presents /A.DICK.TED/ through March 4. For more information visit www.thewilburygroup.org.

Production photos by Erin X. Smithers

