

## Starchaser

*Lucy Graham*

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<http://www.stagewhispers.com.au/reviews/starchaser>



**By Lally Katz (World Premiere). Arena Theatre Company and Arts Centre Melbourne. Fairfax Studio, Arts Centre Melbourne. Director: Christian Leavesley. Set: Jonathon Oxlade. Sound: Jethro Woodward. 2nd June, 2012 (two public shows).**

If your space-crazy child is going to see *Starchaser*, you'd better be quick. There are only two public shows this weekend in the intimate setting of the Fairfax Studio, after eight shows for school groups this week.

At the World Premiere performance this morning, writer Lally Katz told the school children gathered that she had wanted 'to write something about longing'.

'I just really like outer space,' she shrugged, 'and it's my dream to go to space in my bed.' Thirteen-year-old Kata travels to the planet Attalia and back to the past to try to stop her parents from dying. With the help of her bed-toy Lion, who has incredibly transformed into a living, breathing animal, Kata's bed is transformed into a spacecraft. Space enthusiasts will enjoy her encounters with a black hole, the planet powered by girl's tears, and the sea of second chances.



*Starchaser* has some wonderful visual tricks that appealed to the all-boy audience, as did the sound effects and lion fights. The cast of four (Anne-Louise Sarks, Phil McInnes, Jamieson Caldwell, and Jessica Clarke) cover approximately a dozen roles between them.

Speaking after the performance, director Christian Leavesley talked about the need to condense Katz's story into manageable fare and yet retain the key storylines. It seems there is a deal of material on the cutting room floor to be the starting point for a sequel. Perhaps the cuts should have been more ruthless. Extended sections of dialogue with complex concepts brought out the fidgets in the all-boy audience, and far too many philosophical statements are inadequately fleshed out: 'I am braver and stronger when I remember', 'You must never cry or our mission is over', 'The lies we tell ourselves are the biggest lies of all.' These notions are unlikely to be accessible to the target audience in the theatre format.

*Starchaser* will appeal to space fans, and with the help of the educational notes available online, may begin to unpack some of the themes raised in the story.