

## The Perfect Life – Full Reviews

Adelaide Fringe Festival, March 12-21 2026

### The Barefoot Review ★★★★★

There are moments in the theatre when you know what you are watching matters. Not because it is flashy or provocative, but because it is resolutely true. Within the first five minutes of this show I felt that unmistakable certainty. This is one of those rare shows where laughter, recognition, discomfort and compassion sit side by side, and none of them feel forced.

Amity Dry, singer songwriter, musical theatre writer, has created something deeply humane here. She has also assembled a cast that is musical theatre dynamite. Their collective pedigree includes *Miss Saigon*, *Les Misérables*, *Hamilton*, *Six* and *Urinetown*. There is not a weak vocal moment. Harmonies are rich and assured, solos are delivered with interpretive intelligence, and the emotional shading throughout is the kind that only comes from performers who understand that singing is not about volume or virtuosity, but about meaning.

What struck me most powerfully is that this is a musical about ordinary women, and that is precisely where its brilliance lies. It's not woke. It's not driven by a gender identity agenda. It is not an academic middle class didactic feminist treatise telling working class women how they should be. There's little swearing. There are no tits and ass. There is fearless, if occasionally a little cliché, honesty. There is celebration of ordinary women that is deeply feminist in its spirit. Life, this show reminds us, is often messy, sometimes unfair, occasionally shit, but still worth turning up for.

There is a great deal of lived experience in Dry's writing, and it shows. At times the book edges close to sentimentality but pulls back before slipping too far. Dry's wit and understanding that clichés exist because they hold truth is evident. And it's a musical, after all.

At the heart of the piece are four women whose lives intersect through a long-standing ritual of fortnightly Friday drinks. Time poor, emotionally stretched, and subject to life's many curveballs, some thrown by circumstance, others by decades old choices or momentary lapses of judgement, they keep showing up for one another. That, too, is a quietly radical act.

Dry plays Lily with moving sincerity. A devoted wife to Patrick, who is, I think, an accountant, Lily is a proud café owner and unacknowledged community catalyst, and a mother of nineteen-year-old twin boys recently embarked on the adventure of a gap year, and she is left, suddenly an empty nester. Lily is lonely, disoriented, and quietly grieving the woman she once was. Dry's performance is moving and personal. Lily is brave enough to acknowledge that sometimes endurance looks like resignation.

Jess, played by Chloe Zuel with panache, warmth and emotional nuance, is the free spirit returned home after six years abroad, with stories of her Latin lover, Lorenzo. But she returns for a far more sobering reason, to care for her mother, who has cancer. Zuel balances sass with vulnerability superbly, charting Jess's journey from free spirited traveler to unexpected bridezilla with humor and heart.

Kerrie Anne Greenland's extraordinary portrayal of Kate shows great attention to character arc, delivering what are arguably the most dramatically poignant moments of the evening. Fiercely independent, ambitious and self-sufficient, Kate is a solicitor whose carefully constructed life is derailed by a one-night stand with a man who was, quite simply, a dick, pun very much intended. Greenland portrays the progression from the initial crack in Kate's armor to its complete breakdown so completely that it is deeply moving.

Then there's Bec, played by Dee Farnell with a masterful balance of comic timing and gravitas. Bec is a mother besieged by three children, a loyal friend, Jess's cousin, a weary yet committed partner to Matt, and a woman who uses sarcasm as both shield and sword. Farnell's delivery is razor sharp, but she never lets humor blunt the truth.

The fractures that emerge between these women feel honest. Their different lifestyles, values and stages of life create tension, but ultimately sisterhood prevails. The triumph here is not neat resolution, but resilience. Bec Francis's set and prop design functions almost as a fifth character. Static, it is transformed through inventive and evocative use of projections within window spaces, creating a strong sense of time passing and lives unfolding. It is elegant, economical, and beautiful. Jo Casson's direction holds the entire piece together with clarity and grace, shaping character arcs, visual cohesion and narrative flow. Nothing feels rushed or lingers too long.

Musically, Matthew Brind's arrangements, augmented by Marco Callisto, give the tight, responsive band led by Martin Cheney a score that is rich, textured and emotionally moving. Dry's musical sensibility shines throughout. The songs serve the story, and the result is clever, artful and moving. Of the twenty-two song set list, I was particularly taken by the ensemble renditions of *Another Day* to open the show and *Bridezilla* but Lily's *How Did We Get here?*, Kate's pleading *Go To Sleep*, and Bec and Jess's *Come to Bed*, blew me away!

This show made me laugh. It made me weep, with sadness and joy. It made me think of my late grandmother and mother, my partner, my female friends and colleagues, my niece, and the young woman at the checkout at my local Foodland. Exceptional women. Ordinary women. As if those terms are somehow opposed.

**This is a triumph for Australian musical theatre. It deserves a life beyond Fringe. It should tour. I will be nominating this work for Adelaide Critics Circle and Fringe Awards. *The Perfect Life* should be seen widely, nationally and internationally.**

There are only nine performances left, and they will sell out. Go. See it.

John Doherty, March 13 2026

## Theatre Matters ★★★★★

It's been more than a decade since I first reviewed *Mother, Wife & the Complicated Life* at Chapel Off Chapel. I adored it then, but I love it even more now. Amity Dry has perfected the craft of writing a musical. More than 15 years in the making, *The Perfect Life* is now the perfect musical.

Amity Dry had already written some amazing songs. Songs to sing along to, that stay with you after you leave the theatre. Under the musical direction of Martin Cheney, a five piece band bring these stunning songs to life, enhanced by the musical arrangements of Matthew Brind, with additional arrangements by Marco Callisto and original arrangements by Mark Ferguson.

While the earlier production of *Mother, Wife & the Complicated Life* was probably more a series of connected vignettes, *The Perfect Life* is now a beautifully constructed musical that interweaves the stories of the four characters as they navigate the challenges of their everyday lives. While one is facing death, another is dealing with new life. While one is planning a wedding, another is unexpectedly planning a divorce. While one is seeking a career promotion, another is turning down work to focus on family. Everywhere you look there is a beautiful, but gentle contrast to each woman's story. The four women all have their challenges, but all remain likeable. The villain of this piece is not a person, but simply reality. Life throws us a curveball from time to time, and that reality of unwanted circumstance is the real villain. It's a villain that can't necessarily be overthrown, but rather must be worked through. *The Perfect Life* takes us on a journey with these women – their highs and their lows. There are some powerful messages to be found through the story.

**In an era where most new musicals are stage adaptations of a well known book or film, or a juke-box musical about a well known person, *The Perfect Life* is a rare gem: a truly original musical. It's a story that can be translated across cultures and races. While there are some hilarious moments, *The Perfect Life* respects and honours the journey of motherhood and womanhood.**

This production of *The Perfect Life* was not merely a glimpse of its potential, this was a production that showcased just how amazing it already is on a limited budget in a small theatre at the Adelaide Fringe Festival. A surprisingly detailed set design by Bec Francis immediately establishes the location of Lily's Cafe in a converted old church. Vertical screens subtly differentiate scenes and are tastefully done. An excellent lighting design by Mark Oakley adds to the ambience.

Director Jo Casson has found the perfect balance of humour and tenderness. All four characters feel real and relatable. There are plenty of opportunities for laughter, but there are also moments when you could hear a pin drop. Moments that leave the audience in complete silence, hanging on every word and not daring to applaud an incredible performance because it no longer feels appropriate to clap. Indeed, the audience was transfixed. Beautifully balanced, the show ebbs and flows from the highs to the lows, and then has us leave the theatre smiling and wiping away the tears.

Bringing these characters to life are four exceptionally talented performers. Kerrie Anne Greenland gives a powerful performance as Kate. She is career driven but there's also a softness to her character. Her journey through this show is a masterclass.

Chloe Zuel is excellent as Jess, playing the role with the right balance of warmth and humour. Jess is a young woman, newly in love, planning a wedding but also caring for her sick mother. Zuel brings a genuine warmth and fun to the character. Dee Farnell is outstanding as Bec, the exhausted stay-at-home mother of three, who adores her children despite all her complaints. She is witty and charming and the love for her family is sincere.

And then there's Amity Dry. The first time I saw this show as *Mother, Wife & the Complicated Life* Amity Dry played the role of business woman Kate. In *The Perfect Life*, Amity Dry has stepped into the role of Lily. Dry is extraordinary in this role. Not many people can write the concept, book, music and lyrics for a musical and then pull off a performance to match the professional experience of the cast that includes leading roles in mainstage productions of shows such as *Les Miserables* and *Hamilton*, but Amity Dry has succeeded. Her performance is breathtakingly heartfelt and genuine.

*The Perfect Life* has been edited, revised, workshopped and transformed into a truly remarkable work of theatre. The choice to leave the cast as just the four women characters not only makes this a potentially more viable commercial option, but centres the attention entirely on the women. This story is about them. It's about their lives and how they interact with those around them – their spouses, their children, their parents. It's how they feel in those moments, and it makes for a powerful story.

However, this is not merely a musical for women. Apart from some funny moments in songs such as 'Baby Come To Bed' that got some laugh out loud reactions from the men in the audience, this musical also offers an insight into the lives of women and what it's like being a modern mother. In many ways this is a wake-up call to invest in relationships, share the load and communicate with each other.

Whether you relate more to Jess, Kate, Bec or Lily will no doubt depend on where you are at in your own life journey. *The Perfect Life* is entertaining and uplifting, but it's also deep and thought-provoking. It's a fun night out, but the story remains with you for days. All week I've had snippets of numerous songs playing in my head, from 'the honeymoon is over' to 'I would have bet on us' to 'what is perfect' to 'baby come to bed' to 'I don't care' to 'B-R-I-D-E-Z-I-L-L-A'. All that's missing is a cast recording of *The Perfect Life* and I'd be playing it over and over on repeat.

**Adelaide Fringe has now come to an end but surely this can't be the end of *The Perfect Life*. This outstanding production needs to be seen and heard.**

Alison Hillbig, March 24 2026

The Clothesline ★★★★★

**It's been quite a while since I've seen a show that was enough to make a grown man cry. I'm still wondering whether these were tears of joy or whether Amity Dry's musical tapped into something even deeper, maybe the 'mother in me'.** The laughter also ripples through this show like waves to the shore, their crests crashing with the regularity we take for granted at the beach.

This highly polished production is about not taking women for granted anymore. It is empowering in all the right ways. By letting the story and songs make their plentiful points perfectly palatable it is thoroughly entertaining. The theme of perfection is tackled from various angles, from the lawyer with a planned trajectory for her life to the shambles of having to manage raising three kids under five. Throw in a wedding, a funeral and a divorce and watch the fireworks.

It is a real treat to hear four professional voices completely across the music. The songs are presented with panache, pizzaz, and pitch perfect precision. The exquisite four part harmonies seem effortless. The accompaniment by a five piece ensemble on stage is excellent. The spoken script is honed to keep it flowing naturally, as tight as the clever choreography with no superfluous moves. Along with their extensive creatives team - too many to list here, check the program - the set by Bec Francis deserves a special mention. More than a mere meeting place, it ideally evokes the spirit of the show as a place of ritual, communion and mutual compassion.

There are surprises and troubling times when things get as tough as life can throw at us. 'It's not perfect but it's worth it' is only one of the takes on this theme. Another is the hilarious 'I Don't Care!', and the extreme opposites of the seduction song duo is pure comedy gold. Solos and various groupings bring variety, just as the fun and drama are beautifully balanced to keep the story constantly on course.

Although they are stretched to breaking point when people around don't always provide the support others need, the bonds of friendships retain their strength. By leaning into and on each other, we can get through another day together.

This is obviously the perfect hootenanny for women, being a celebration of being female, but males will also benefit from this frank, forthright dose of truth-telling. Perhaps it's true that nobody and nothing's perfect, but one thing is for sure, this is a bloody perfect musical.

David Cronin, March 13 2026

## The Scoop ★★★★★

Think *Desperate Housewives*, but less desperate and no murder. We meet all the female stereotypes you might expect – the busy mum, the empty nester, the businesswoman, and the young, unmarried millennial. We are welcomed intimately into the inner lives of these leading ladies, and soon find ourselves within them, experiencing their stories as if they were our own.

The show debuted at the Adelaide Fringe in 2009 under its former title *Mother, Wife & the Complicated Life*. It later evolved into a full-length musical that toured regional South Australia. From there it travelled internationally, performing Off-Broadway at the New York Musical Theatre Festival and reaching audiences in London, Norway and Finland. *The Perfect Life* now returns to Adelaide fully grown and enriched with lived experience.

*The Perfect Life* has the perfect cast, and it's nothing short of star-studded. Please indulge me as I fangirl for a moment. Kerrie Anne Greenland won the Helpmann Award for Best Female Actor in a Supporting Role in a Musical for her portrayal of Éponine in *Les Misérables* and most recently graced the stage as Ellen in *Miss Saigon*. Chloé Zuel is best known for originating the role of Eliza in *Hamilton* and Catherine of Aragon in the pop musical sensation *Six*.

Rounding out the cast is local talent Dee Farnell, who works as a vocal coach in Musical Theatre at the Elder Conservatorium of Music. She has also starred as Beverly in the award-winning *Come From Away* and Ms Pennywise in the Hayes Theatre Company's production of *Urinetown*.

The stage awaits silently. A hue of pink, amber and blue light floats through a soft mist. Lighting design by Mark Oakley sets the scene for the chapel on Clifton Hill, where our story takes place. Set design by Bec Francis suspends a single stained-glass window above the church-converted café. The walls are dotted with bookshelves and trinkets, creating a warm sense of home. Vertical screens embedded into the set seamlessly transport us to the various locations throughout the story.

*The Perfect Life* is effortlessly supported by a five-piece band, masterfully led by Musical Director Martin Cheney, with excellent arrangements by Marco Callisto. Overflowing with moving solo ballads, the intimacy of the songs brings a subtle cabaret feel.

The a cappella moments closing both acts are vocally and musically stunning. There is also fun to be had with *He Asked Me*, where we enjoy some quirky choreography thrown in for good measure. This energy continues in *Bridezilla* after the inevitable hen's night, complete with a fabulous, fluffy penis hat. Direction is entrusted to the capable hands of Jo Casson. Guiding a nuanced performance from actors working with sensitive material, Casson creates space for each emotional moment to land.

Bec (Farnell), a married mother of three, is the comic highlight and soul of the show. As her boisterous presence fills the stage with "Coffee? Wine? Coffee then wine!", we know we've

found our girl. She becomes the voice for all weary mothers or just about anyone who has had a rough day.

Farnell, herself a mother of two, brings authenticity to the role, capturing both humour and emotional depth in bucket loads. She has belt notes for days, but brought me to tears with her heartfelt storytelling in *The Honeymoon Is Over*.

Enter Kate (Greenland), single, 42, and suddenly pregnant. Will she keep the baby? What about her promotion? We buckle in for the inevitable ride. Greenland's heart-wrenching rendition of *The Choice* is a glorious moment of musical theatre gold. Her acting and vocals transcend performance, holding us in the palm of her trembling hand. For me, this is the song you listen to on repeat. The one every soprano will want to learn.

Jess (Zuel) is our free spirit, back in Australia due to her mother's cancer diagnosis. She soon finds herself swept up in a whirlwind marriage. Zuel received perhaps too many laughs for *I Don't Care* as she captures the raw essence of new baby overshare. This is her moment to truly show off her money notes. A special mention to the showstopper *Baby, Come to Bed*, where Farnell and Zuel absolutely bring the house down.

And then there's Amity Dry – the mother of it all. Having portrayed Kate in the original production, she now comes full circle as Lily. The main events unfold in the safety of her café, where she nurtures friendships, holds secrets and reflects on the ever-changing nature of life. It feels like the perfect role for the musical's creator. We see so much of Dry's heart in her performance. It is present in every word and song – her love for her children, her husband, her parents and her friends. She takes us on the journey.

The audience shares a sense of camaraderie as we laugh, gasp and cry together. No laugh is louder than the shared appreciation for the miracle of an epidural. When the lights finally cut to black, we are instantly on our feet with a grateful standing ovation for the cathartic experience we have shared.

**But this is what excites me the most. Amity Dry is giving Australian musical theatre a voice. In an industry dominated by works from Broadway and the West End, this is the answer. I want more of this. Musical theatre sung in our own accent, telling our stories.**

**We need to support new Australian theatre, nurture it and help it grow. What Dry has created is truly special. And don't even get me started on the many cabaret shows she has written.**

**I hope theatre companies across the country will produce this musical in years to come. Let's get behind *The Perfect Life* so that the world stage knows its name.**

Bethany Eloise, March 13 2026

## Lia Loves ★★★★★

Some musicals sweep you away with spectacle. Others quietly hold up a mirror to the messy, contradictory, deeply human parts of our lives. *The Perfect Life* does the latter, offering a funny, heartfelt, and sharply observed exploration of modern womanhood, friendship, and the pressure we place on ourselves to have everything figured out.

Written by Amity Dry, and a new incarnation of her earlier work, the musical follows four women whose lives intersect through friendship, circumstance, and the uncomfortable realisation that the “perfect life” they imagined might not look the way they expected. It’s a story that balances humour with vulnerability, creating space for audiences to laugh, wince in recognition, and perhaps feel a little less alone in the chaos of adulthood.

Under the thoughtful direction of Jo Casson, the production leans into the intimacy of the material. Casson allows the relationships to breathe, giving each character room to unfold in a way that feels authentic and relatable. The pacing carries a quiet confidence, trusting both the writing and the performers to carry the emotional weight of the piece.

Musically, the show is in very capable hands. Musical direction from Martin Cheney ensures the score moves with clarity and warmth, while the arrangements by Matthew Brind and Marco Christo (with original arrangements by Mark Ferguson) bring a polished musical theatre sensibility that supports the narrative without overwhelming it. The songs themselves do much of the emotional work, offering moments of reflection, humour, and catharsis throughout the evening.

The production design creates a welcoming and believable world for these stories to unfold. Set design by Bec Francis and Jo Casson provides a flexible environment that shifts fluidly between the women’s lives, while lighting design by Mark Oakley subtly shapes the emotional tone of each scene. Sound design by Jamie Mensforth keeps the performances clear and connected, an essential ingredient in a show so reliant on honest storytelling.

But it’s the casting that truly elevates the piece.

Kerrie Anne Greenland brings compelling emotional depth to Kate, the ambitious lawyer whose carefully structured life is thrown off course by an unexpected pregnancy. Her standout number *The Choice* captures the character’s internal conflict with honesty and power, while the tender yet heartbreaking *Go to Sleep* reveals a more vulnerable side of Kate as she confronts the life-changing reality ahead of her.

As Jess, the free-spirited daughter who returns home to care for her ailing mother, Chloe Zuel delivers a performance filled with warmth and emotional sincerity. Her feisty solo *I Don’t Care* becomes a moment of defiant self-expression, reminding the audience that Jess’s seemingly carefree attitude hides layers of complexity.

Dee Farnell provides some of the production's sharpest comedic moments as Bec, the stay-at-home mother of three whose sarcasm and wit cut through the emotional intensity with impeccable timing. Farnell and Zuel make an excellent comic pairing, particularly in the hilariously relatable *Baby, Come to Bed*, a duet that playfully explores the realities of long-term relationships vs newlyweds. The pair also shine in *The Honeymoon is Over*, delivering sharp humour with precision.

At the centre of it all is Amity Dry herself as Lily, the seemingly composed café owner whose 'perfect' life begins to reveal its own cracks. Dry performs with a quiet authenticity that gives the character real emotional resonance, particularly in *How Did We Get Here*, where Lily reflects on the unexpected distance in her marriage. Later, the poignant *Quiet These Days* becomes one of the evening's most moving moments, allowing the audience to sit with the stillness that sometimes accompanies adult relationships.

What makes *The Perfect Life* so engaging is its refusal to offer easy answers. Instead, it gently suggests that perhaps perfection was never the goal in the first place. Life, the show reminds us, is messy, surprising, and occasionally overwhelming, but it's also richer when shared with people who see us clearly.

**Warm, witty, and quietly moving, *The Perfect Life* is less about achieving perfection and more about embracing the beautifully imperfect lives we actually live. In doing so, it discovers something far more meaningful than perfection. Connection.**

Lia Loves, March 14 2026

## On Your Markus ★★★★★

Amity Dry's *The Perfect Life* finally lands at the 2026 Adelaide Fringe and quite like a beautifully honest conversation set to music – the kind that starts with laughter over a glass of wine and ends somewhere deeper, where the real stories live.

Dry has crafted a contemporary musical that slices through the glossy idea of a flawless life and replaces it with something far more relatable. On paper, the characters seem to have it all – careers, relationships, families, the dream ticking along exactly as planned. But as the story unfolds, the cracks begin to show, and that's where the show finds its heart. Behind every curated snapshot sits a far more complex reality.

**What makes *The Perfect Life* resonate is its authenticity. Dry writes from a place that feels lived-in rather than imagined, and the music carries that same emotional honesty. The songs swing between sharp humour and quiet vulnerability, capturing the emotional rollercoaster of adulthood with surprising precision. One moment the audience is laughing at the absurdity of modern life, the next there's a reflective silence as a lyric lands a little too close to home.**

Amity is joined on stage with perfection. Dee Farnell is Bec, Chloe Zuel as Jess and Kerrie Anne Greenland in the role of Kate. Fine actors that know their craft and hold their space on stage and equally support each other.

The cast bring warmth and personality to the stage, creating a believable circle of women navigating the beautiful chaos of life together. Their chemistry feels natural, almost like you're eavesdropping on real friendships – the kind built on shared experiences, late-night chats and unwavering support when life throws its inevitable curveballs.

The staging keeps the focus where it belongs: on the stories and the music (a brilliant live band). It allows the emotional weight of the material to breathe, giving each moment space to land with the audience.

What's refreshing about *The Perfect Life* is that it never tries to offer a neat solution to life's challenges. Instead, it embraces the imperfections – the messy, unpredictable moments that shape who we are. It's a musical that acknowledges that happiness isn't about achieving some flawless end goal; it's about finding strength, humour and connection along the way.

By the time the final song lands, the message is clear: perfection was never the point.

In a festival known for big laughs and bold spectacle, *The Perfect Life* stands out for its sincerity. It's thoughtful, relatable and quietly powerful – a musical that reminds us that the most meaningful stories are often the ones closest to home.

Get to this one my friends.

Markus Hamnence, 12 March 2026

## All About Entertainment ★★★★★

Writing and staging a musical is no small feat. Yet Amity Dry has written, staged, and produced *The Perfect Life*, and even stepped into a role herself. How this has been achieved is something I can't begin to answer, but what I witnessed last night was a triumph for local Adelaide talent.

*The Perfect Life* explores motherhood and friendship through four distinct characters. As reviewers, James and I are not mothers, and I'll admit we were sceptical about how much we would connect with the story. We needn't have been. Each character is so well drawn that you're bound to recognise yourself in at least one of them. It's a sharp, often hilarious, and ultimately devastating exploration of regret. Sliding doors. What could have been. The myth of the "perfect life". Or as the old line goes - get married or don't, regret it either way.

The music is heartfelt and beautifully written, grounding the show in emotional honesty while still allowing space for humour. Having previously seen Kerrie Anne Greenland and Chloe Zuel in other professional productions, it was my first time seeing Dee Farnell - and what a standout. Her portrayal a mother of three, was exceptional and delivered some of the show's funniest moments.

Amity Dry delivers her role with depth and authenticity, capturing both the vulnerability and quiet strength of a woman navigating life after children and a failed marriage. Kerrie Anne Greenland is equally compelling, bringing nuance and emotional precision to the role of a corporate lawyer facing the unexpected realities of single motherhood. Chloe Zuel plays a millennial returning home from abroad to care for her sick mother, with warmth and relatability.

What truly elevates the production is the way all four women work together, their chemistry is seamless, and their voices blend beautifully in harmony, creating moments that feel both powerful and intimate. Just when I thought the themes might not fully resonate with me, there was a moment that completely shifted my perspective. "Don't Care," performed by Chloe Zuel, was a highlight, sharp, funny, and unexpectedly relatable. It proved that this musical isn't solely about motherhood, but about friendship, identity, and the shared experiences of women, including those who haven't had children.

**This production has the potential to grow into something significant, reminiscent of the success of *Menopause the Musical*. When you see a project created with this much heart and authenticity, you can't help but want it to succeed. The staging, lighting, and band were all excellent, supporting the story without overshadowing it. I sincerely hope *The Perfect Life* receives the accolades it deserves.**

This homegrown musical that has travelled the world, from Adelaide Fringe to New York, the UN and beyond, before being interrupted by the pandemic. It deserves this rebirth - and Adelaide should be proud to have it back.

Betty Samis & James Murphy, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

## A Thousand Words ★★★★★

Four women, whose lives are linked through a café and friendship, each find themselves confronted by the realities of being a woman in a harsh world. There is Lily, the owner of the café, who seems to have it all, including a newly emptied house thanks to her boys going on a gap year. Then there is Bec, the feisty mother of three who still manages to maintain a sense of humour. Lawyer Kate, single and ambitious, brings some youth to the group, as does Jess who has just returned from abroad to catch up with her friends. Over the course of roughly a year, these ladies will run through a minefield of experiences that will test themselves and their friendship.

The Perfect Life is the latest iteration of the musical which began life in 2009. With book, lyrics, and music by Amity Dry, it is clear that she feels this is a work that needs to be regularly brought out and improved. There is much to admire here. Writing a musical essentially on your own and not only getting a run in Australia but the US and the UK as well is nothing to be sneeze at, and Dry deserves many plaudits for continuing to champion this work that clearly has special significance for her. Taking on the role of Lucy, Dry reminds the audience of how wonderful her singing voice is and she connects deeply with the songs her character sings. She brings a motherly warmth to the stage that serves as the anchor point to the rest of the cast.

She surrounds herself with some phenomenal talent both onstage and off. Local performer Dee Farnell, fresh from wowing Adelaide audiences in *Come From Away* last year, brings the sass as Bec. Her songs (especially solo “The Day I Was Chosen”) are some of the musical highlights of the show and the audience reaction to them are loud and prolonged. Farnell’s singing is in a class of its own, although her dialogue felt a little stilted at times.

With all that being said, this is absolutely well worth seeing. The performances alone are engaging and vibrant - and darn it, it’s good to see Amity Dry back onstage again - and the story is one that will resonate with so many people in the audience, especially the females. The professional look of the show is a credit to the production team. It is an enjoyable and emotional night out that will leave you thinking for a long time after.

**Any chance to see a local performer write something as bold and striking as this is something that should be championed by audiences wholeheartedly. This is a magnificent show for anyone who wants to see how well Australian musicals can sound. Full credit to Amity Dry for continuing to work on the show and bring to the very appreciative audiences.**

Rodney Hrvatin, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026

## Glam Adelaide ★★★★★

Australian musicals are few and far between. Australian musicals written by an Adelaide artist are even rarer. Debuting back in the 2009 Adelaide Fringe Festival under the title *Mother, Wife & The Complicated Life*, writer, composer and performer, Amity Dry has continued to develop her semi-biographical musical both here and overseas. The result is *The Perfect Life*, a reflection on womanhood at various stages and life contexts, and the value of connection and friendships to get us through the ups and downs along the way.

*The Perfect Life* follows a circle of friends all at different stages in their lives, living different experiences. Jess is the younger of the four, caring for a sick mother after having travelled the world and fallen in love. Kate is a lawyer, single and independent until some pregnancy news throws her a curveball. Bec is a stay-at-home mum living in chaos with a loving husband and two children. And Lily is a newly empty-nester while her teenage boys enjoy a gap year, running a cafe and evaluating her relationships as her living arrangements change. All four of these women deal with aspects of life that represent a large cross-section of the enthusiastic, predominantly female audience on opening night.

The cast of women portraying these four are powerhouses in their own rights in musical theatre with exciting resumes for any theatre nerd. Amity Dry, Kerrie Anne Greenland, Chloé Zuel and Dee Farnell bring the quartet to life with warmth, heart and humour. They are all accomplished vocalists and their solo performances are the most riveting; each being given their moment throughout the story. Greenland's transition from single girl delusion to post-partum challenges is heartbreaking. Zuel's show-stopping number, *I Don't Care* is brilliantly delivered and a great pick-me-up towards the end of the second act (memorable for anyone who is childless and had to listen to their friends regale every detail about their cherubs). Farnell's character Bec is consistently an absolute standout. The character has always been a popular favourite in Dry's writing even back in its first inception. Bec has all the laughs, the colourful/kooky costumes and "it's funny because it's true" moments that had audience members cackling raucously. Farnell is also such a strong character performer and it is fantastic to see her getting the chance to revel in the writing and develop her own take on the role.

Despite these standouts it is the friendship and love between these women that is well led by Dry. She emanates warmth and seems to be genuinely thrilled to sing with and share the stage with these women. Hopefully seeing her drive and passion for this project coming into a new life is as fulfilling to her as it is to watch.

The set and props design by Bec Francis combined with digital design by Brad Pickford is well suited to the story and feels as comfortable and functional as Lily's cafe evokes. Musical Direction by Martin Cheney ensures a tight band of musicians gives the musical a polish and depth that is well balanced in the Arts Theatre by Jamie Mensforth's sound design. The music (composed by Amity Dry and arranged by Matthew Brind) is designed to tell a story more-so than create hit singles, which is the best type of musical theatre; but the aforementioned *I Don't Care*, along with *Baby, Come to Bed* and *What is Perfect* do stick in the memory after the bows. The naturalistic script is accessible, heartfelt, and witty. Overall

a bit of further editing and more balance between the dramatic numbers could help tighten the production further

**It is a huge undertaking to create a musical, let alone give it life to grow and develop. Amity Dry and her team have polished this show into a big production with plenty of heart and enthusiasm. While it is certainly aimed at female audiences and the girls night out, it is a story that shows care for the female experience without being at the expense of the men in their lives – it just brings these women to the forefront.**

The few men in the crowd were seemingly enjoying it just as much, so be brave guys and take a chance; you might just love it and understand the women in your life a little better because of it.

Hayley Horton, March 15 2026

----

### **The Advertiser ★★★★★**

The musical is set in an old chapel converted into a cafe where four women meet every Friday for wine and chat – Lily (Amity Dry) the cafe's owner whose 19 year old twin sons are embarking on a gap year, Bec (Dee Farnell) a stay-at home mum to three little kids, Kate (Kerrie Anne Greenland) a successful lawyer who suddenly finds herself pregnant and Jess (Chloe Zuel) a Millennial who has returned after six years in Europe to be with her dying mother, a mate of Lily, Bec and Kate.

They're all struggling with the messiness of real life but pushing on with as much good humour as can be mustered and, despite the odd dummy spit, supporting each other through thick and thin.

The actors really connect and there's a sense in the audience that we are all of those characters. Jess, who is sick of hearing about other people's kids: "I love your kids, I do. I just don't want to talk about their poo." Kate who wonders whether there is a mother in her; Lily, whose empty nest reveals the emptiness of her marriage, and Bec, who has swapped idealism for practicality. "I've plucked a 2-inch hair from his nose, I stopped shaving my legs for sex about 10 years ago".

It's a beautiful story, the tunes are rollicking and sung with feeling, but it's the lyrics that really make an impact. We might not be singing along the way we do to Mamma Mia but almost every line strikes a chord. We laugh, we cry, we relate.

Jane Ford, March 25 2026

## Theatre Diaries Adelaide ★★★★★

Four women. Four far-from perfect lives. One unshakable bond. *The Perfect Life* is a musical that brings women's stories about love, grief, parenthood and careers into a much needed limelight.

Written by Amity Dry and directed by Jo Casson, *The Perfect Life* is a work that was developed in South Australia by an incredible team - and the commitment to the craftsmanship of this musical shows. Amity Dry plays the role of Lily, joined with Kerrie Anne Greenland as Kate, Dee Farnell as Bec, and Chloe Zuel as Jess. The show opens at Lily's chapel cafe at Friday night drinks. Initially it appears that all women have it together, however the image of their "perfect" lives quickly begin to shatter. Keeping this group afloat is their sisterhood (and a little bit of song and dance!) and over time, these pieces are put back together, highlighting the transformative power of female friendships and support systems.

The plot tackles the relatable, contemporary challenges faced by women, evoking a deep sense of connection with the audience, who on opening night, were mostly women of all ages. Each character is given equal dimension and attention throughout the show, which further allowed us connection to their stories.

The onstage dynamic between the four women was magnetic, creating a compelling onstage sisterhood. They guide the audience through the tough moments with sincerity, and then have us laugh together at relatable quirks of the female experience. Chloe and Dee have a hilarious onstage duet about sex which had the audience erupting in laughter, a fine example of when the show fully leans into its cheeky side! Contrastingly, Amity and Kerrie Anne deliver a touching duet in act II (cue tissues). Whilst the vocals and the storytelling is the focus, we are still treated to exciting and visually exciting choreography that leans into the goofy-ness of the characters, adding a welcome dynamism throughout the show.

Amity's score under Martin Cheney's music direction is purely magnificent! It takes the audience through heart-wrenching moments that are approached with a musical softness and delicacy, as well as through bouncy, uplifting songs that make the audience laugh. Vocally, each woman gets their moment to truly soar. And what a treat it is to have these four incredible performers in these roles.

***The Perfect Life* is simply a perfect musical. It proves the magic that is created when women come together both onstage and off. This is the show to make a night out of this season before it is destined for further greatness!**

Sophie Tslolous, March 13 2026

### **The List/In Daily ★★★★★**

A wedding, a birth, a funeral: this musical explores the perfectly imperfect lives of four women navigating different stages of womanhood. There's the high-flying lawyer blindsided by an unexpected pregnancy; the empty-nester facing the quiet collapse of her marriage; the woman approaching a major life transition while caring for an ailing parent; and the exhausted mother of three simply trying to make it through another day.

Amity Dry's work is an ode to the friendships that hold women together when everything else feels unsteady (including the friendships, sometimes). It celebrates life in all its messy and unfiltered glory. The messaging is brilliantly executed by the four actors (Kerrie Anne Greenland, Dee Farnell, Chloe Zuel alongside Dry) who deliver this heartfelt show with sharp wit, emotional honesty and songs that land with both humour and poignancy.

Life will inevitably leave its mark on us all: 'Time will heal, but the lines will remain'. Yet this musical reminds us that we carry on because, ultimately, it is all worth it, and in those heaviest moments it is those who walk besides us that make our journey through life light.

Erandhi Padmaperuma, 23 March 2026

---

### **Kids in Adelaide ★★★★★**

Amity Dry: The Perfect Life is a beautiful, wholesome, musical theatre production that takes the audience through the many stages and phases of women's lives, from relationships, babies, careers, breakdowns, grief and everything in between. It's funny, honest and incredibly relatable, with heartfelt storytelling woven through powerful songs and moments that will have you nodding along in recognition. This is a full two-and-a-half-hour theatre experience, and it's very different from the shows we've come to know and love from Amity over the years. This is wholesome, thoughtful and deeply human. Even more impressive, the show is completely original, with Amity Dry writing both the script and the music herself. Packed with talent and heart, it's a brilliant reminder of the quality of local arts. Bring your best friend, your mum, even your nan. You'll laugh, smile and probably shed a tear as you recognise so many moments of life on stage. A gorgeous celebration of women supporting women and a show that will leave you feeling seen, understood and very glad you came.

Jacki Bishop, 13 March 2026