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Strapping young men in football shorts kick the footy around on a sparkling green field. This is not so unusual on a typical Australian weekend. But this is the State Opera Studio and these young men are focused on musical scores rather than football ones!

The result is incongruous and yet amazingly powerful.

***Different Fields*** is indeed as different as its title suggests as the musical production explores the people and lives behind the scenes of the Bears, a fictitious and yet not so far fetched Australian Rules football club.

Drama often abounds in the Australian football arena and this operatic production explores the human frailty behind the big bucks, powerful PR and worshipping fans.

The libretto is insightful, sometimes a little clichéd, but always perceptive in its handling of emotion and human interactions and the music flows well under the direction of **Timothy Sexton**.

The set is inspired with the audience taking field-side seats facing a synthetic semi-circle of grass, a stand of teal-coloured seats backed by the Admin and Media offices. An excellent lighting design by **Sue Grey-Gardner** emphasizes the reality of a football establishment, both on field and off. All in all this is a wonderful setting for the drama that unfolds.

The story centers on the Bear's leading goal scorer *Adam James*. The Bears have made it to the Grand Final and the pressure is on. While focussed on the club's star, this one-act Opera also appeals in its ability to portray the thoughts and feelings of each character.

**Peter Mitchell** is brilliant as the young football star, fielding the expectations of managers, media and fans. **Mitchell** is so believable that it is as if one of the Adelaide Power or Crows footballers has walked off the field and into the opera studio, even as he sings the beautiful "*Bright September Morning*".

**Lachlan Williams** is also outstanding as the 12-year-old fan *Casey* who idolizes his hero and learns the reality of friendship. (**Williams** alternates with **Benji Riggs**).

**Deborah Caddy** is suitably overbearing, and in fine Soprano voice, as the single mother who is trying to protect her young. Her rendition of "*Who Are the Heroes*" provides one of the musical highlights of the night.

**Adam Goodburn** and **Kathryn Dineen** adroitly add to the drama as the media and management making the most of the lionizing of the young Bear star.

**John Greene** is suitably dark and dire as the "accountant" who points out "certain obligations" to the beleaguered *Adam*.

This is an intriguing production that is likely to appeal to both sports fans and theatre goers, and deserves a following as large as some of the football clubs.