
DRUMS IN THE NIGHT

Brink Productions and State Theatre Company

Space Theatre

Until 16 April 2005

Review by Simon Slade

This is a production where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. And that is saying something given the parts added into the equation. The performers are the Brink ensemble, along with Michael Habib and Jacqy Phillips. The lighting designer is the brilliant Geoff Cobham. The director is the inspiring Chris Drummond. This is a new and modern translation by Finegan Kruckemeyer. Gaelle Mellis has designed a set that astounds with each dramatic revelation. Quentin Grant, composer and musician, provides songs and underscoring that suit the production perfectly.

Together they create a masterpiece with one of Brecht's earliest works. "Drums in the Night" which opened in Munich in 1922, and Brecht received the prestigious Kleist prize for young dramatists as a result.

The play shows a society ravaged and plundered by war, contrasted with individuals made rich by the same conflict. The Balickes have done very well for themselves financially, but their daughter has lost the love of her life in the war. She is now pregnant and engaged to another man, also made rich by the war, and that is cause for a family celebration. The dinner scene brings a whole new meaning to the expression "snouts in the trough" and had the audience rolling in the aisles.

Michael Habib, as Karl Balicke, is vocally and physically perfect for the role. Ksenja Logos, as his daughter Anna is also superb, both passionate and yet distracted. Jacqy Phillips, as Amalie Balicke, wife and mother, is a tremendous asset to the cast as a whole, as her character has some of the most varied reactions to other characters.

Cameron Goodall's Waiter and Michaela Cantwell's Maid are both hilarious. David Meador, as Baboush, is particularly funny in the opening sequence of the play, which sounded almost as though it could have been written by Shaun Micallef.

William Allert, as Friedrich Murk, is the perfect German version of a Hooray Henry, and Rory Walker, as Andreas Kragler, delivers a performance that is as measured as it is gut-wrenching.

The staging is inspired. The table made people hold their breath, the bar stools made them gasp and the final surprise had them reaching for their medication! The lighting design proved that less is more, and that a lighting designer's best tool can be darkness!

This is South Australian theatre at its best.