

# Review: Venus in Fur

## by STARC Productions

Venus in Fur uses well-trying tropes in a searing, savage indictment of the way some men use sex and power to manipulate or control.



Adelaide's STARC Productions return to the stage in 2021 with Venus in Fur, a delicious two-hander from the American playwright David Ives, some of whose comic one-acters the company previously explored in their 2019 A Night At The Theatre.

Writer and director Thomas Novachek (Marc Clement) is auditioning for the lead in his new play, Venus in Fur, a rewrite of a 19th century erotic novella by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the man who gave his name to masochism.

He's nearly given up hope of finding the right person when in walks Vanda (Stefanie Rossi) whose perfection – she even has the same name as his character – is simply astounding, and in due course, beguiling.

In the course of 90 minutes, Thomas's vision of his play as a clarion call for freedom and liberation is transformed into a reality of the darkness and danger of sexual submission and control.

The deliberate depiction of Vanda as a femme fatale – a stereotype if ever there was – is a calculated risk, but one that ultimately pays off due in large part to Tony Knight's nimble direction, and Marc Clement's rich and textured characterisation of the thinly-drawn playwright.

Venus in Fur uses a number of well-trying theatre tropes – a play within a play, role reversal and power shifts among them – in a searing, and at times savage, indictment of the way in which some men continue to use sex and power to manipulate and control.

With the current goings-on in our Federal and State Parliaments – a play within a play if ever there was – one hopes that our elected representatives might take notice.

**Peter Burdon – The Advertiser**