

Toyer | Leading Line / Tony Knight Productions

VALERIE LILLINGTON
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I don't know if it's the title, *Toyer*, (by **Gardner McKay**) or if people just didn't want to confront the heat outside to get to **the Bakehouse Theatre** in Angas Street, Adelaide, but this play attracted only a small audience for the matinee. It is an acceptable word but it would probably incur some frowns of doubt in a game of Scrabble, so let's say it's not a word in general use. Just as well. The programme tells us that a toyer is someone who toys, paralysing victims in order to 'toy' with them.

Maude meets *Peter*. There are just the two of them in a small house near Los Angeles, in fact in a small room with settee, table, comfy chair, desk, fridge, counter, with all the necessary bits on it, including a food processor – a pleasant homely setting, well lit and stage managed by **Stephen Dean**.

From such everyday things comes horror. When *Maude* used the word 'visceral', I knew exactly what she meant. To tell you the truth, I

wanted the play to end before it did because I was so confused, so involved, so anxious and so pent up about what they call this "cat and mouse thriller" that I wasn't sure where it was going, who was playing games with whom and how much more I was going to be drawn into what was a maze of terror, with no way to get out. To get that kind of reaction, you need good actors and a good director. You get them. **Stefanie Rossi** is brilliant as *Maude* and **Marc Clement's** performance as *Peter* is spine tingling, both under the direction of **Tony Knight**.

From the moment of *Maude's* dramatic entrance after work and a game of tennis, to its murmured, "The end", psychologist *Maude* and palmist *Peter* play macabre mind games with multiple players – two on stage and those of the audience. Music, not a lot but significant, plays a role too. Exhausted from her day, *Maude* sits back with a drink (one of too many Vodkas and Tequilas) to listen to the tenors' duet "Au fond du temple" – so very beautiful, so relaxing and emanating such a glorious sense of the safety and relaxation of home. Elvis is there, Carmen and Cio-Cio-San with "One Fine Day", all just a touch and cleverly appropriate. There are mind pictures that stay – of zebras for instance and then of goldfish in a bowl of lemon jello, unable to swim any more as it sets. Don't think though that this is a sort of *Clockwork Orange*. No, it's more subtle.

There were a couple of occasions when I could not understand why *Maude* did not act as I thought most women would have done in crucial moments in the play. At one point she says, "Maybe I'm insane". Maybe she is. She says, "The real crime is not that it happens; the real crime is that we know about it and turn the page."

Toyer was being premiered on the opening night in Adelaide and is the first collaboration between local production companies, **Leading Line Productions** and **Tony Knight Productions**. Future collaborations are promised. Bring them on! And come on, Adelaide, fill **The Bakehouse Theatre** for the rest of the season of *Toyer*. No worries if it's hot; sit in air conditioned comfort and sweat it out trying to work out who's winning the deadly game while watching an intriguing play, well performed and well directed.

Leading Line Productions in Association with Tony Knight Productions presents

Toyer

by *Gardner McKay*

Director Tony Knight

Venue: The Bakehouse Theatre | 255 Angas Street, Adelaide.

Dates: 17 – 27 January 2018

Tickets: \$33 – \$28

Bookings: www.bakehousetheatre.com