



STARC Productions is back at the Bakehouse with **Reasonable Doubt**, written in 2008 by award-winning Australian playwright, Suzie Miller, and directed by Tony Knight, former Head of Acting at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, in Sydney, and now teaching privately in Adelaide. It was first performed in the Edinburgh Fringe, directed, incidentally, by Adelaide Fringe favourite, Guy Masterson, as well as in the New York Fringe, where it won the Overall Excellence Award for Outstanding Playwriting.

It is a small world, full of coincidences. Masterson's Theatre Tours International team were in Adelaide for the Fringe earlier this year and one of his group, **Tim Marriott**, needed a local performer to join him in his play, Mengele. He found Stefanie Rossi, who appears in this play and, so impressed was he, that he asked her to appear with him again recently at the Edinburgh Fringe, which she did, making her a new addition to Masterson's team. Hopefully, more will follow for her.

Stefanie Rossi and Marc Clement play Anna and Mitchell, two people who had been on a hung jury in a murder trial two years earlier, and had become close while the court case was being conducted, spending a night together in her room, talking. They are meeting, once again, this time in a luxury hotel room, with plans to consummate the previously

unfinished encounter, but they begin to discuss the case. With a retrial underway with a new jury, and a verdict due at any time, they review their own positions at the first trial. Although Anna and most of the others thought the man was guilty, Mitchell, and one other juror, thought that he was innocent. It was Mitchell's strong stand for his views, and his charismatic presence as he argued his point, that had attracted her to him, and it seems that neither has forgotten that encounter that has had a profound effect on their lives since then. Over the course of the hour that this play takes to unfold, lies and secrets are exposed, emotions run high, and their relationship constantly changes and evolves.

With the trio working together on a regular basis it is only to be expected that their successive productions exhibit an increasing tightness and unity of thought. In this production, it is clear that Knight's direction, and Rossi and Clement's performances are coherent. The sound and lighting design, by Stephen Dean, is completely in synchronisation with their work.

Clement is suitably brooding and somewhat distracted as Mitchell, conveying that his character's thoughts are not entirely on his lust for Anna. Clement develops his character in stages, prompted by Mitchell's need to tell Anna everything and unburden himself of his secrets, and by a series of unanswered telephone calls. Clement maintains the tension and keeps the audience guessing, while covering a mixture of emotions.

Rossi's Anna is vivacious, and more than ready to pick up where they had left off two years earlier but, initially, she is a little hesitant, not knowing how Mitchell feels about her and the situation between them after all that time. Rossi takes all of the twists and turns in Mitchell's story, and responds convincingly to every one, as well as following Anna's own complex range of emotions.

This is a taut hour of theatre, made more intense by the intimacy of the Bakehouse Theatre, and the performances have been selling out. Be sure to see this piece, but book in advance.

Reviewed by Barry Lenny, for Broadway World Thursday 13th September 2018.