

# Perplex by Marius von Mayenberg: Seriously Comical And Theatrical Brilliance At Bakehouse Theatre ~ Review

The Bakehouse Theatre – Main Theatre, Fri 17 Aug.



*Perplex* was written by German playwright Marius von Mayenberg in 2010. It was first performed in English by the Sydney Theatre Company in 2014. This splendid version comes courtesy of the recently created Adelaide based Joh Hartog Productions.

The four person cast, David Hirst, Claire Mansfield, Eddie Morrison and Lisa Harper

Campbell all play themselves... at least, initially. While David and Claire have been away on holiday, Eddie and Lisa were looking after their house. And that is the first and last time that there is any sense of normal plot! Each character soon begins to seamlessly morph into another, changing roles and identities from partner, friend, lover, child, employee and back again. While this may sound confusing it is surprisingly easy to follow – testament to some really fine acting, astute direction and clarity of script. In fact it adds an enticing element of intrigue wondering who will become what next!



In a sense plot becomes irrelevant. It merely provides a context for a lively discussion of bourgeois relationships, sexuality, fidelity, treatment of the working class, evolution and philosophy that at times becomes heated but is more often insightful and very funny. Throw in a dash of slapstick and a Beckett like reluctance to accept aspects of reality and you have a recipe that sounds exhausting but in fact time flew by.



Interestingly, humorous references to Nazism would indicate that sufficient time has passed for Germany to be able to laugh about parts of it now, but I imagine those with tragic connections to that time might still find them offensive.

The cast work brilliantly together. Like old friends or partners joking and bickering they manage their multiple roles effortlessly. There is an expressive physicality to their performances that keeps the audience engaged and alert.

In a great mix of the comical and serious, ideas about life come thick and fast and at times had me trying to stifle belly laughs to catch the next line. Things eventually come full circle towards an unexpected and delightful end with Claire wondering how they got there and who, if anyone was in control.

*Perplex* is a great show; marvellous entertainment for the mind and soul.

**5 stars Michael Coghlan**

*Perplex* continues at The Bakehouse Theatre – Main Theatre from 8pm until Sat 25 Aug. Book at [www.bakehousetheatre.com](http://www.bakehousetheatre.com).