



Presented by Bakehouse Theatre Company
Reviewed Saturday 7 September 2013

Written by Hannah Moscovitch, *East of Berlin* is an award winning holocaust play, but with a difference. Instead of focusing on the victims of the horrifying events that took part in the Nazi death camps of WWII, or on those who carried out the unspeakable acts of mass extermination and vile medical experiments, it instead deals with their children and how they have been impacted by the events that embroiled their parents.

Rudi (Adam Carter) shockingly discovers that his father was an SS Doctor who experimented on Auschwitz prisoners during the war. Not unexpectedly he struggles to accept this revelation from his friend Hermann (Tom Cornwall) and he rebels. He leaves his family in South America, who are living in a community of post-WWII German immigrants, and travels to Germany where, curiously, he studies medicine at university. He meets and falls in love with fellow student Sarah (Clare Mansfield), a Jewish girl, or does he? Perhaps this is his final revenge on his father's legacy. Sarah and Rudi's relationship is painful and is initially based on lies. At first he does not divulge his family background but is eventually forced to do so, when Hermann lets slip, and Rudi's fractured world comes crashing down around him again.

Moscovitch's text is dense but well crafted. Despite the high emotion and unfolding tragedy, there are light moments and a few welcome opportunities to chuckle. Carter shoulders the lion's share of the text, and he is excellent. Director Peter Green and Carter have jointly developed an insightful understanding of Rudi's character, and it unfolds with controlled and deep feeling. Carter gives meaning to the concept of the 'sins of the father' being visited upon the child. He was well supported by Cornwall, who convincingly played the role of an 'aesthete' with swagger and style. He and Carter handled some confronting scenes with the skill and accomplishment that might be expected from more experienced actors. Mansfield gave a studied performance in how to successfully develop a character from the first flushes of a relationship through to its utter destruction. The three actors melded beautifully.

Manda Webber's simple multi-levelled set worked well and was suggestive of a Nazi death camp from the outset. The use of projections was confronting. The cast moved through and around the set easily, and used very few hand properties which placed the focus even more so on the text and its emotional content. Alexander Ramsay's lighting design was also simple and effective and always created a sense of place and the passing of time.

This is not an easy play to enjoy. The subject material is confronting. The psychology is challenging. But do see it.

Reviewed by Kym Clayton

Venue: Bakehouse Theatre, 255 Angas Street, Adelaide

Season: 5-21 September 2013

Duration: 80 minutes without interval

Tickets: Adults \$28, concessions from \$15

Bookings: 8227 0505 or www.bakehousetheatre.com/shows

Photo: Clare Mansfield and Adam Carter in East of Berlin. Photo by the Bakehouse Theatre Company