

## East of Berlin – Bakehouse Theatre – Til 21 September – 4K



**By Peter Maddern**

There is a lot of freshness in this production that focuses on issues that arose over 60 years ago. Born at the end of the war, Rudi (Adam Carter) is tormented by the knowledge that his father worked at Auschwitz as he ponders his future in Berlin having left his family and friends, particularly, school buddy Hermann (Tom Cornwall), in Paraguay.

In Germany he creates a new persona for himself that airbrushes away the inconveniences of his heritage but then falls in love with a Jewish girl, Sarah (Clare Mansfield) who has come from New York to see and learn about what happened to her mother in the concentration camps.

As the writer, Canadian Hannah Moscovitch is a new wunderkind, ‘an indie sensation’. She has made telling use

of books about and interviews done with the children of Nazis undertaken by Jews who were themselves children of Holocaust survivors. As much as the Holocaust is well worn territory in all artistic genres, *East of Berlin* is as moving and gut tearing as any and certainly up there with the moral contradictions of Tom Keneally’s *Schindlers’ Ark*.

But, of course, to deliver that impact to audiences is another matter and three freshly minted graduates from local drama schools are presented under the wily and experienced direction of Peter Green to make it happen. In truth, the play stands or falls on the performance of Rudi, here by Adam Carter, who is actively at work throughout the entire 80 minute production. Mr Carter has quite a future ahead of him for his is a performance of great confidence, energy and credibility. His anger is palpable whether on display or being suppressed when with Clare. It is an anger that he not only directs at his father but also at his own being given he carries his genes. His performance is a compelling delight.

Clare Mansfield has her challenges as well as she successfully wrestles with the conundrum of whether her Sarah’s dislike of Germans is a belief or something more deeply inherent in her. While Tom Cornwall plays the foil to Rudi and Clare as his Hermann has reconciled and rationalised the curse of his genes. Cornwall presents this view as almost an innocence that is as alluring as much as it is a danger to those around him not so in harmony with their being.

Credit must also be given to Manda Webber’s set and costume designs that allow for a seamless transition between places but convincingly take us to Auschwitz with both Sarah and Rudi. Her costumes possess not only flexibility for the moment but with Rudi they carry almost the stains of German war and concentration camp uniforms that he so desperately wishes to wash out of his life.

*East of Berlin* may well be the best work seen at the Bakehouse Theatre this year.

Tags: [Adam Carter](#), [Bakehouse Theatre](#), [east of berlin](#)