

THEATRE – Reasons to be Pretty – Bakehouse – 3.5K

Theatre

by Peter



Image by Michael Errey

By Peter Maddern

Those easily offended by foul language and superficiality in human relations probably should not indulge in Neil Labute's *Reasons to be Pretty*, the Bakehouse Theatre Company's latest production.

The play opens with a tirade by twenty-something Steph (Clare Mansfield) directed at her soon to be ex-boyfriend, Greg (Nic Krieg). It's about some sort of unkind comment relayed to her by Carly (Krystal Brock), the security guard at Greg's work but it is not exactly clear what was said and why but this is no reason to hold back on a good old bellyache. None of this is helped by the sanctimonious and most unlikeable Kent (David Hirst) who is Carly's partner; well, as long as it suits him.

Nothing about that introduction should put anyone off seeing this very humorous play where under developed emotional quotients are let loose on a stage stuffed full of desires for self-gratification yet also, strangely perhaps, a vacuum when it comes to appreciating others for what they are beyond the surface.

Greg is the only level headed one amongst them and Nic Krieg delights as he absorbs the barrage and then calmly goes about getting his own back, all the while keeping close to what truly matters to him. I think this is the best performance I have seen from him. Clare Mansfield's Steph is too a carefully crafted study, in her case of fragile self-indulgence, seemingly oblivious to her own assets while Brock's Carly neatly portrays the confusion that can arise from power without the substance to pull it off.

David Hirst meanwhile maybe rightly accused of some overacting – yes David we are on to you – yet, how else can you make such a loathsome character accessible to one's audience.

Joh Hartog's direction and set are quietly understated as he lets his talented cast make the most of material they no doubt would find all too familiar in their cohort of friends and associates.

Great fun especially if shallow people are a humorous topic of interest to you.

Kryztoff Rating 3.5K