

THE PERFECTIONIST

[Adapt Enterprises](#)

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Until 08 Aug 2015

Review by [Linda Edwards](#)

"The Perfectionist", by David Williamson, is set in the 1970s and explores themes such as open marriage, socialism, capitalism, the evolving roles of women, gender equality in marriage, parenthood, and jealousy.

The story revolves around Barbara, who would like to finish her PhD but whose academic ambitions are forced to take a back seat when her husband Stuart accepts an appointment in Denmark and continues to work on his own thesis. His achievement, he says, will be for the whole family, but Barbara wants achievements of her own. Feeling unfulfilled, unrecognized, and frustrated, she reads a book called "Open Marriage". The temptation to act on the ideas in the book soon arrives in the person of a handsome young Dane who applies for the job of babysitter to the couple's young children.

Ross Vosvotekas does a fine job in his multiple roles as founder of the company, producer, director, and actor in the part of Stuart. Juggling so many facets of the production must be extremely difficult, but he pulls it off and has a talented cast who bring their skills and expertise to the production. Among these, Cheryl Douglas is the strongest, and she presents the complex and emotionally charged role of Barbara in a completely believable way. The character also acts as narrator, and Douglas is able to switch in an instant from high emotion to the calmness of the narration.

Chris Knight handles the role of the Danish babysitter Erik with flair and an impressive Danish accent. This character could have fallen into caricature because of his over-zealous political ramblings on the joys of socialism, evils of capitalism, and the rights of workers, but Knight avoids this by giving the role some depth and humour.

Kim York and Rick Mills play Stuart's parents Shirley and Jack, who introduce further conflict when Barbara and Stuart return to Australia in the second half of the play. York is lively and funny as a woman who has given up her own career for her husband (or has she?) and Mills is good as the overbearing and misogynistic father who set impossibly high standards for Stuart to strive to achieve.

Costumes by Amanda Jane Bell feature plenty of the expected flares, and the songs played over scene changes are well selected to suit the era and the unfolding story. The set is plain and perhaps too drab and colourless for the period, but it functions well structurally as flats in Denmark and Australia, with minimal changes necessary. The play appeared before the 1985 telemovie but it is filmic in form since it contains numerous short scenes. The many scene changes are handled seamlessly by subtle adjustments to the lighting to suggest different times and locations, and the cast making any necessary physical changes.

All of the characters are perfectionists in a way and all fall short of their own ambitions and attempts to live an honourable life. If the good-hearted caterwauling of the audience in one scene on opening night was anything to go by, the play shows us just how far we have come in some areas in the last four decades, but it still seems relevant today and many of the issues remain topical.