

## The Golden Dragon



**By Roland Schimmelpfennig. Bakehouse Theatre Company (SA). The Bakehouse. July 8th – July 22nd, 2017.**

Set in a Chinese/Vietnamese/Thai restaurant, ensemble piece *The Golden Dragon* shows a small slice of life centred on a restaurant and the people within and around it.

While there are moments of humour, this play is not a comedy. Written by Roland Schimmelpfennig, there is a series of random events about the myriad of characters, some of whom work in the restaurant and others who live in the flats above.

Schimmelpfennig plays with time, as some of the events appear to have happened in one day, while others have occurred over a longer period. All these seemingly random events are then interspersed with the fable of 'The Cricket and the Ant'. The trick is to not over-think it and just enjoy the experience.

While some of the vignettes are quite confronting and brutal, the audience is seeing "real" people and alas, there are a lot of confronting and brutal people in the world.

Actors Robbie Greenwell, Jo Pugh, Clare Mansfield, Brendan Cooney and Mark Healy all play multiple roles with great characterisation. They all glide through the character changes with ease and there are no weak links. Each actor has a dominant character that drives the narrative - Greenwell's flight attendant, Pugh's mother in the kitchen, Mansfield as The Boy, Cooney's Chinese uncle and Healy's Cricket.



It is difficult to choose just one performance for each actor as they portray their characters with such skill that even without the minor costume or prop change, the nuance of each personification is there. This team is an ensemble working in harmony. As well as playing the characters, the actors narrate and even though at times this can be confusing, with tight direction from John Hartog, it all makes sense in the end.

Hartog has used the space well, directing his actors around the multi-level set, dominated at its centre by the small kitchen of the restaurant, changing characters and minor costumes in a seamless manner.

Set design by Tammy Boden brings the audience into the tiny restaurant kitchen, parts of which are functional as there is some actual cooking, so the experience is enhanced by the aromas.

Lighting and sound design by Stephen Dean create the ambience needed on each level for each different area, from the brightness of the kitchen to the subdued street lighting on the bridge.

*Maxine Grubel*