

Toyer



Leading Line Productions & Tony Knight Productions. The Bakehouse Theatre. 18 Jan 2018

Maude's (Stefanie Rossi) hurried, frightened rush into her apartment, locking the door and leaning against it in relief, signals danger and entrapment before a word has been spoken.

When the insistent knocking and calling of a man on her door starts, the fear he is more than a good Samaritan claiming back his flashlight after helping Maude out with her car earlier, is like a deafening klaxon alarm.

He needs to make a call. He's in between home, and where his partner may possibly be. So Maude lets him in.

The following hour unfurls as a power play between Peter (Marc Clement), who may or may not be an actor, a mechanic or anything and Maude, who is a doctor.

Peter is as imposing, needy and cruisy cool, as Maude is professional, polite and wearing thin on the hospitality front. Throw in the subject of a local crime spree against women by a subject dubbed 'Toyer' and things move beyond trivial banalities between strangers.

Director Tony Knight steers the production's pace with deft care. He gives just the right depth and measure to playwright Gardner McKay's quite disturbing yet illuminating exploration of the human capacity to seek control over people and circumstances in such a way that there is no consequence, consciously or unconsciously.

Both characters seek the upper hand, yet it is Maude who works hardest to separate fact from fiction. She fights to maintain her own inner balance in a surreal, terrifying, yet blackly comic situation in which a relationship between her and Peter is fashioned.

This relationship seems to be simultaneously predicated on inner emotional need and things as sinister as they are ordinary, depending on the circumstance minute to minute, action to action.

Stefanie Rossi and Marc Clement balance each other in performance brilliantly. Rossi's confident, upper handed, intellectually sophisticated yet casual Maude has to work double time to compete with Clement's roll out of Peter's flash speed mind games, which owe their power to nothing more than well directed confidence and cunning.

These actors leave enough room for an audience to ask the hard questions that dive below the surface level of what they experience. Do I toy?

David O'Brien – Barefoot Review

When: 17 to 27 Jan

Where: The Bakehouse Theatre

Bookings: bakehousetheatre.com