

THE THEATRE GENE
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Reasons To Be Pretty
Bakehouse Theatre Company
Bakehouse Theatre
12 June 2015

Contemporary American playwright Neil LaBute has his finger on the pulse of American social intercourse: the good, the bad, and the ugly, but mostly the latter two. And retired senior lecturer at Flinders University and director Joh Hartog has his finger on the pulse of Neil LaBute. The preview I saw last night was polished and complete like an experienced mid-season show. Joh has cast well using a foursome of recent and exuberant graduates from Adelaide College of the Arts and Flinders University Drama Centre.

Greg makes a mistake with four-year girlfriend Steph and is unforgiven. Greg's best friend at the book warehouse begins to break bad with wife Carly - a security guard also at the warehouse - and accessorises Greg. Greg and Steph continue seeing each other as you do with an ex- in that horrible space of new freedom, (what happened?) and huge disappointment.

Neil LaBute's super-realism stop-start, think-as-you-speak dialogue worked a treat here. Our hero Greg as played by Nic Krieg is a sensitive but hapless life wanderer. Feelings of humiliation, and the embarrassment of telling a lie, are writ large on Krieg's Greg's face. Greg's laid back energy level was in sharp contrast to David Hirst's vein-popping performance of Greg's pal Kent. Hirst possesses an enormous capacity for big expression and surprising gesture and movement, that I'm sure is appreciated by the kids at the Women's and Children's Hospital in his work with the Starlight Children's Foundation. Krieg and Hirst together are a dynamic duo.

Clare Mansfield's Steph begins hysterically shrewish in the opening blue with Greg and matures into a brave, hurt and regretful ex-lover trying to find the restart button. Krystal Brock gave Carly blue collar battler realism. Krystal has a past film performance that was out of this world - having screened on the International Space Station! Again, I must say for the fourth time now, another genuine, warm and emotionally true performance, that as all good actors must, finds the humour, finds the love and finds the conflict.

A must see. Bravo!

David Grybowski
13 June 2015

Opening 13 June, to 27 June