

German writer Marius von Mayenburg is surely one of the luckier playwrights of our time, having established deep and singularly rewarding connections with Berlin's celebrated Schaubühne theatre, and with at the equally eminent Baracke.

He's churned out a play a year, more or less, for the past two decades, and has likewise tried his hand at many styles of writing, from historical drama to deeply experimental modern forms.

Some will remember his *Moving Target*, presented in an Adelaide Festival 10 years ago. While overlong, and ultimately running out of steam, it was an often-riveting experience of genuinely postmodern theatre.

*Perplex*, a Joh Hartog Production, at the Bakehouse Theatre, is along similar lines, if more overtly comic.

Four incredibly committed actors, Lisa Harper Campbell, David Hirst, Clare Mansfield and Eddie Morrison, give their all in an attempt at wrangling Mayenburg's complex prose — which loses nothing in a brilliant but uncredited translation — with each character changing constantly in mood or tone or even identity, often in mid scene, or in mid sentence.

There's no story, rather a continuum, one thing leading to another, more or less expectedly.

Director Joh Hartog has done an extraordinary job with *Perplex*, and I simply love these four fine actors, but at 100 full minutes it's really heavy going.

When the characters begin to speculate aloud about whether the piece has finished, or what it's all about, at around the 70-minute mark, you can't help but get the message.

*Perplex*

Bakehouse Theatre until August 25

PETER BURDON, The Advertiser

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