

BIOGRAPHY: A GAME – Australian Stage On-line review – by Stephen Davenport.



As *Biography: A Game* opens; we see all five characters onstage. With its small cast and a few pieces of furniture, it is a stark play that poses a straightforward question: What would we do if we could live our lives over?

In some respects it is an old-fashioned piece, but it is reverently and respectably done. The five characters; *Hannes Kürmann* (**Tim Lucas**) a behavioural scientist; *Antoinette Stein* (**Krystal Brock**) – Kürmann's future wife; the *Director* (**Adam Carter**); a *Female Assistant* (**Lisa Harper Campbell**), and a *Male Assistant* (**Patrick Clements**); are all rehearsing a play.

Swiss playwright **Max Frisch**, creates a situation in which the protagonist, *Kürmann*, is provided with the opportunity to relive his life and make different choices that potentially can alter not only his future but also his past.

The Bakehouse's presentation wears its heart on its sleeve and much of the praise should go to **Joh Hartog's** controlled and precise direction, and the fine ensemble at his disposal. It is almost impossible to describe the plot of this cerebral play without offering spoilers, but suffice to say that *Kürmann's* choices have consequences that affect him yet other characters assert their own independence and impinge on *Kürmann's* freewill.

Meanwhile, the rehearsal takes place with the *Director* becoming almost dictatorial. The play within the play is a shadowed, darkly intelligent entertainment, without any reinventions but this kind of play doesn't require innovation due to the complexity of its story and the choices made by the characters. The devil is in the detail, and **Hartog** animates it with feelings and a latent severity. That's also the prevailing mood of **Lucas's** performance as the flawed yet likeable *Kürmann*.

There's great presence from **Carter**, as he finds himself brow-beating his cast into psychological submission. It all sounds sombre but it isn't. There is light relief, flashes of comedic delight but there is also sinister undertone lurking not far beneath the surface which raises its head often.

Brilliantly executed and faithful to the spirit of its creator's original intention, *Biography: A Game* is a theatrical treat that anchors thought-provoking dialogue with a satisfyingly intelligent story.