

## Closet Land

STEPHEN DAVENPORT | 29 NOVEMBER 2013



THEATRE REVIEW | Sharp, persuasively acted and exceedingly intense, *Closet Land* offers theatre-goers an interrogation play done right – and gives playwright Radha Bharadwaj a showcase for her political views.

From the first line to the last, there is a feeling of confidence that the writer is in complete control of her material. The play may be an alarming, tense psychological thriller that's really like an 80-minute grilling and a propaganda piece for Amnesty International, but because it's strictly directed, the experience is more nuanced than one might expect.

In the intimate Bakehouse Theatre, director Olivia Jane Parker manages to create shock-and-awe with knuckle-whitening tension at what's happening to a victim (Melissa Rayner) who is questioned, tortured and molested by a cruel and sadistic interrogator (Benjamin Orchard).

The poor woman is a writer – of children's books – who has been abducted in the middle of the night and imprisoned. The authorities claim her latest book is embedded with dissent messages and her inquisitor relishes the chance to break both her body and mind. The journey is nerve-wracking, but the young writer isn't easily dragged into madness as she allows her mind to escape into the fantasy world of *Closet Land*.

Uncomfortable, insightful and thought-provoking, the production mixes sufficient art with the unrelenting mind games to end up with a winning combination. Definitely not for the squeamish.

*Growling Grim Productions is presenting Closet Land at the Bakehouse Theatre until November 30.*