

Constellations Review – The Advertiser – by Peter Burdon

Bakehouse Theatre

Until April 9

Constellations, a cerebral romance from British playwright Nick Payne, receiving its SA premiere in a snappy production from STARC Theatre.

Roland (Marc Clement) and Marianne (Stefanie Rossi) meet, fall in love, live their lives, with ups and downs, and, inevitably, death.

It's a slight and well-worn premise, but Payne's brilliant writing makes it sparkle.

The endless possibilities of their lives and relationship are given full flight in a rapid-fire sequence of 50 or so short scenes, where the same or similar words return again and again with constantly shifting emotional pitch and yaw.



Constellations stars Marc Clement Stefanie Rossi. Picture: Supplied

On the surface, the characters could hardly be less alike. Roland is a beekeeper, Marianne a quantum physicist. He seems to have lapsed into his career, her's has been a calculated, straight line. (That said, Aristotle wrote about both beekeeping and physics as models of interactivity, so perhaps not.)

As Roland, Clement is a charmer and a conciliator. As for Marianne, when her cool equilibrium is upset by something inherently unstable - the sudden onset of terminal illness - her desperation is barely controlled.

Rossi gives an explosive performance in this often searing role.

The to-and-fro of the play is given ample assistance by the clever set design, a ping-pong court and table affair where force and effect are brought into sharp relief as one version of the same words impacts on the interaction between the two.

Tony Knight directs the action with his customary light hand.

Constellations is a reminder that relationships are an infinity of component parts, that can go in any direction, sometimes unpredictably. Until death.

- PETER BURDON