

CONSTELLATIONS:



Reviewed by Barry Lenny, for Broadway World
Thursday 31st March 2022.

Director, Tony Knight, performers, Marc Clement and Stefanie Rossi, and sound and lighting designer/operator, Stephen Dean, collectively being STARC Productions, are working together to present **Nick Payne's Constellations**, which will be their final production in Adelaide's much-loved Bakehouse Theatre, renowned for presenting high-quality productions by a

range of theatre companies, and it is always a very busy Adelaide Fringe venue. The new owners have made the appalling decision to end the lease to the Bakehouse Theatre, and to use the building as an adjunct to the main church next door and, some have suggested, perhaps even demolishing it to extend the car park. It is a travesty.

This group, though, is going out with a bang, not with a whimper. Award-winning playwright, Payne's, play is somewhat reminiscent of J. B. Priestley's time plays, such as *Dangerous Corner*, in that there are myriad possibilities of how a situation might progress, as a couple repeats an encounter and relationship, in a tragi-comic romance.

Roland, an apiarist, and Marianne, a physicist, meet at a barbecue. We see an attempt to break the ice, then a slightly different version, then another. Most end badly, one ends well. She explains her belief in multiple alternate universes, and we then see how things might have happened in a range of those universes, going back and restarting parts of their conversation numerous times, in numerous ways, with numerous consequences, not necessarily in chronological order. She tells Roland, "Every choice, every decision you've ever, and never made, exists in an unimaginably vast ensemble of parallel universes." What we are seeing here is alternative versions of those two people as things happened in each of their various universes.

More than just a clever concept, it is a script that presents a big challenge for the performers and the director to create a range of personalities for each of the characters, as we follow them from one universe to another. It is a complex demand, for each character to be recognisable as the same person in each realm but, equally, they must display sufficient differences to indicate the alternate versions. Actors often play several roles in a production, creating a range of characters. This goes one further, asking for a range of versions of one character. This is not a play for the faint-hearted actor.

To meet those criteria demands exceptional work from the director and performers alike. Knight, Rossi, and Clement achieve this. They do this on a set that has only a table and two chairs, a curtain of lights across the rear, and suspended globes, with the only costume change being Rossi's shawl. Dean's lighting, though, adds much to the performance. This all puts the focus firmly on the performances of Rossi and Clement, who make us forget the difficulties involved in this play through their fluid and superlative performances.

Be sure to catch this production, STARC's last in this venue. Where STARC will go when the Bakehouse closes is yet to be revealed, but, wherever it is, follow them.