

## East of Berlin



**By Hannah Moscovitch. Bakehouse Theatre Company. Directed by Peter Green. Bakehouse Theatre, Adelaide. September 7 – 21, 2013.**

If you were a child of a Nazi war criminal, how would you navigate through your life? Would it be possible to move on from the knowledge of the terrible crimes committed by your parents? Could you really love them, knowing what they did and believed in?

In *East of Berlin*, Bakehouse Theatre Company has undertaken the production of a confronting yet compelling story.

Canadian playwright Hannah Moscovitch has been inspired by books of testimonies from children of Nazi war criminals. The testimonies were based on interviews conducted by a Jewish journalist and psychologist who were themselves children of Holocaust survivors. She was fascinated that the interview subjects felt guilt and shame for their parents' crimes and went to great lengths in seeking atonement. She found the descendants of Nazi war criminals seemed to be caught between two extremes—total estrangement from their parents so that they could live their lives, or unmitigated love and support while ignoring the past.

In direct address to the audience as he stands in the present outside his father's study working up the courage to go in, Rudi, played by Adam Carter, recounts the past in a series of flashbacks laced with dark humour. His life has been in upheaval since he discovered his father had been an SS doctor at Auschwitz conducting medical experiments.

Rudi meets and falls in love with Sarah, played by Clare Mansfield. Sarah is a New York Jew with a past that complicates and exacerbates Rudi's struggle to deal with his own history, one that was never his own. Their story is one entangled with emotional baggage, secrets and lies.

Director Peter Green has a brilliantly chosen cast. The performances are excellent from the trio of actors, who also include Tom Cornwall as Herman, Rudi's friend. Adam Carter brings out Rudi's inner conflict beautifully and the flashbacks with Clare Mansfield, as Sarah, are riveting to watch. Clare Mansfield's work on the Hebrew language with the assistance of a Hebrew coach is to be commended.

Manda Webber designed the set. It is very effective, with the study door set in a high perimeter fence and at one point with a projection of Auschwitz behind, appearing almost like the doorway to hell.

This is a gripping tale with plenty of emotional hold, making it a show worth seeing.

*Sharon Malujo*