

Home Thoughts - Adelaide Fringe Review **5 STARS**

by [Julia Wakefield](#) Weekend Notes



Sarah and Clara, Adelaide sisters (from press release)

Home Thoughts is a brand-new play, written and directed by award-winning SA playwright James Watson (*The Triumph of Man: A Comedy in Two Acts*). James is a self-confessed admirer of classic 'in-yer-face' theatre, and aims to challenge our attitudes to privilege and decorum. This play definitely sets out to confront the complacency of affluent Adelaide society. It also poses the following questions: "Why do so many young people feel a desire to leave Adelaide?", "How can we be true to ourselves in the face of others' expectations?", and "What does 'Home' really mean?"

Ren Williams (Clara) and Krystal Cave (Sarah) play two sisters who have grown up in Adelaide. Older sister Sarah has never been anywhere else ("weekends in Victor don't count"). Clara has just returned from Melbourne, having dropped out of her art degree. Both sisters find it hard to reconnect: Sarah still treats Clara as her baby sister, whereas Clara, who likes to lay all her cards on the table, is about to discover how much Sarah has been hiding from her.



Clara confesses almost immediately that she has become disillusioned with her artistic ambitions. She is confused and humiliated, and doesn't feel she's receiving the support she needs from her apparently successful sister. Sarah seems secure in her marriage and teaching career, but their conversation soon reveals the cracks in her confident veneer: her marriage is breaking down, and her career is in jeopardy. Clara's scornful – and often amusing - remarks about Adelaide reveal the unfeeling side of a society that can reject those who don't 'fit in', and Sarah is now painfully paying the price for doing 'everything that mum and dad wanted' instead of following a direction of her own.

As Sarah approaches crisis point, Clara begins to understand herself on a deeper level, and is able to justify why she came back to Adelaide. The two sisters realise how much they need each other, and a new bond is forged between them.

The simple anxieties of two sisters might seem trivial in our current atmosphere of global crisis, but the importance of being true to oneself is a constant struggle that we all face in our daily lives. Wherever we grow up, we are never truly ourselves until we are able to see the presumptions that we receive from our family and culture within a broader perspective.

Watson's play humorously evokes the conventions that characterise Adelaide society, only to demonstrate how suffocating they can become if they are never questioned. At the same time, he shows how Adelaide has plenty to offer those who, having acquired a broader perspective, choose to return and embrace their place of birth.

But how long will Clara stay in Adelaide before she needs to refresh her perspective by moving away again? Neither sister appears to be deeply rooted here, as family is hardly mentioned beyond a passing reference to their conventional parents' expectations. There is no supportive circle of childhood mates, apart from Sarah's estranged husband and Clara's affluent friend and would-be lover, Toby.

In some ways this play feels slightly dated. The girls seem corralled by their upbringing and hardly refer to the rest of the world, as if Melbourne is the only other city in existence. Are young people in Adelaide still unable to imagine travelling overseas and exploring other cultures? Adelaide itself is now a multicultural city, while the ease of international communication enables people to connect with each other all over the world. Yet the isolation of individuals is recognised as a growing problem in cities everywhere. Our family and physical social networks are vital for our mental health, and the bond between these sisters is, for now, the only thing they can both rely on to help them navigate through life. Perhaps 'Home' for them is ultimately the knowledge that they can depend on each other.

Ren Williams and Krystal Cave interact as convincingly as a pair of real sisters, occasionally talking over each other in well-choreographed sequences. Ruby Jenkins' set design keeps props to a bare minimum, while different scenes and characters are subtly evoked by slight changes in costume and appropriate lighting by Erik Strauts. The voice projection could have been better, and there were moments when the lines were delivered too fast to be heard easily. But generally, the actors spoke clearly, and their timing was impeccable. Eerie background music composed by Reggie Parker conveyed the underlying tensions without disturbing the dialogue.

As a relative newcomer to Adelaide (I've only lived here for 20 years) I felt this play nicely captured the insular smugness that can be so irritating about this city, but I also know that Adelaide has a lot to be smug about. This play is a fine example of the exciting young talent that is emerging in Adelaide's thriving arts scene. I look forward to seeing where James Watson takes us next. He may have already left Adelaide to widen his own prospects and horizons, but I'm sure that he will never forget the city that nurtured his gifts.

Why? A conflicted love letter to the city we grew up in

When: 6pm

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Website: <https://www.bakehousetheatre.com>

Where: Bakehouse Theatre, 255 Angas St, Adelaide SA 5000

Cost: Full Price: \$27.00 Concession: \$23.00 Double Your Applause: Admits 1: \$54.00