

Reasons to be Pretty

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Photo: Michael Errey

THEATRE REVIEW |

Neil LaBute's work has the recurring theme of body image within western society.

This is certainly true of his Tony-nominated play *Reasons to Be Pretty*, and it's evident in Bakehouse Theatre Company's respectfully generated production.

Emblematically, the playwright's characters squabble and maltreat one another. The play opens with an impassioned and vehement argument between an enraged Steph (Clare Mansfield) and her restrained boyfriend Greg (Nic Krieg).

Carly (Krystal Brook), has informed Steph that Greg has made an pejorative remark about his girlfriend while talking to Carly's husband, Kent (David Hirst).

As Greg feebly tries to explain his remark about her "regular face", Steph is emotionally wounded and translates his remark into "I'm Ugly". As her fury escalates, the conflict turns violent.

Profanities abound, and as Greg tries to diffuse the situation, Steph's language becomes more coarse and her behaviour more irascible. The result is a shock-and-awe conflagration of indignancy and invective that causes the couple to separate.

At work, Greg discovers that his obnoxious friend Kent is cheating on his good-looking wife. Things go from bad to worse, when Carly tells Greg that she is pregnant. Greg has a dilemma: should he remain loyal to his uncouth mate or should he inform Carly of Kent's workplace affair?

Labute stacks the belligerence and narcissism high throughout the play, and the Bakehouse cast is persuasive, acting with the correct truculence, insecurity and posturing.

Reasons to Be Pretty is sound and attractive, but for all the effort, and fine-handed direction by Joh Hartog, the play is never truly resounding.

Reasons To Be Pretty is at the Bakehouse Theatre until June 27.