

THEATRE – The Audition – Bakehouse – 3.5K

Theatre
by Peter

By Peter Maddern

Movie and theatre patrons alike are quick to distinguish great from poor acting performances without ever much realising what goes into the preparation required, both long term as well as for the particular part involved.

James Johnson's *The Audition* explores that preparation and training through the hoops and humiliations that would be actor Lauren (Clare Mansfield) is put through by director Stella (Krystal Brock) during their audition alone together.

At the end, it seems we need to recognise that superior performance comes from supplanting one's own individuality and soul with that required to be the puppet of the character and the director. What is hard is getting there.

Both ladies give great performances; Brock is forever at her candidate manipulating and infusing her with discomfort with an evil, bloody minded disposition. She braces the dual personality as controller and failure with aplomb. Mansfield writhes from the self-realising and independent young woman she arrived as to the dependent and feeble one she at times is reduced to. Her twists on the director's knife are convincing and compelling.

Yet for all that is worthy of this production, there is something that doesn't quite hold it together. It is probably the issue that the play, especially early, keeps returning to but not adequately answering – why would anyone put themselves through such an audition; what exactly is the carrot that makes this part so much the focus of such psychological brutality? Perhaps by eschewing that question, playwright Johnson ensures we keep focused on the internal rather than extrinsic motivations of actors and directors. It's a call that may also test you when you see it.