

The Bald Prima Donna

SARAH GATES | 9 JULY 2015



THEATRE REVIEW | *The Bald Prima Donna* is a play with no plot and no story.

Trying to “understand” it may interfere with the audience’s enjoyment, but if anything, it is about the absurdity of language, small talk and meaningless sayings.

Romanian-French playwright Eugène Ionesco’s script is brilliant, humorous and understated. It makes fun of the things we say and the banality of polite interactions, with a stark contrast against the backdrop of World War II.

In this production at the Bakehouse Theatre by Max’s Masters (the company that presented *The Removalists* at this year’s Adelaide Fringe), there are enough moments of expressive acting, clever mise en scène and well-timed dialogue to have the audience laughing along.



The story revolves around an English couple (the Smiths) and their farcical dinner party with guests the Martins, and the initial exchange in the Smiths’ well-constructed living room is wonderfully playful and baffling. There is spontaneity to surprise the audience and just a few modern additions to the script. Director Matthew Williams succeeds in conveying the fundamental absurdities about how people communicate and what we value in the face of war and death — issues that still plague the world today. But at times, the acting falls short, and there is over-saturation of misused or under-utilised props. Meaning and humour are obscured as the actors get lost in the script, with subtlety crucially absent; some of the pauses are too long, and emphasis is misplaced.

For a lover of Ionesco, it is underwhelming, but as an amateur theatre experience, it nonetheless offers an enjoyable night out.

The Bald Prima Donna runs until July 17 at the Bakehouse Theatre.