

TWO – Review by Ewart Shaw – 5EBI

While many of Adelaide's traditional pubs are closing, the public house still remains a place of resort and sometimes escape for many people, who just want to get out of the house, take a break, a drink or two. They all have stories and this play takes some of them and creates an engrossing seventy minutes or so.

As I left the Bakehouse theatre on Friday night, I heard a woman in the street mercilessly and indistinctly haranguing her absent boyfriend. For a moment, I thought I'd retraced my steps and found myself in a performance of Two, Jim Cartwrights' challenging play about human relationships set in a North country pub.

As the title implies, it's a play about couples, almost all of whom are unbalanced in terms of power and commitment. There's domestic violence, and other putdowns, lies, deceptions. The happiest couple are obese and not very bright but they've got crisps and the tv remote so they're okay. The principal couple are the landlord and landlady, he's glad handed and she drinks. The tension between them grows until the final moments when the truth is revealed. It's tragic but then you've already guessed that.

As the title might also imply, all the roles are taken by two actors Stefanie Rossi and Marc Clement, directed by Tony Knight. Jim Cartwright has given them evocative words, often reminiscent of Dylan Thomas' Under Milkwood in their casual poetry and has constructed the work in such away as to give both actors the chance for rapid changes of character and costume, and the dramatic context in which to achieve them. The actors keep the north country accents, generally very successfully, as demanded by the inner rhythms of the playwright's prose.

Marc Clement honed his skills in quick character changes, new accents and expressive body language working with Matt Byrne in his fringe comedies at Maxim's wine bar. He does sleazy remarkably well, but is developing as a fine actor in more emotionally significant roles. Stefanie Rossi is a fine dramatic actress and her monologue as the old lady points to a career that could last for decades. Tony Knight has joined forces with these two fine actors and promises more well crafted and articulated theatre.

I saw the play some years ago, staged in bar above a pub in Adelaide, and remembered the dramatic context but very little of the spoken content. I'm really glad to have encountered this mismatched and deeply troubled group again.

**Ewart Shaw
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