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INFLUENCE

State Theatre Company of South Australia

The Dunstan Playhouse

Until 4 June

Review by Nikki Gaertner

David Williamson has again produced a story that has all the elements to keep an audience entertained. "Influence" is thought-provoking, emotional, humorous, dramatic and cleverly written.

John Waters portrays Ziggi Blasko, the brazen host of a talkback radio show who is known for presenting his audacious opinions on air. Low income earners, racial minorities, unfaithful partners – none are safe from Ziggi's views (which are generally not the most politically correct).

Ziggi has many other issues outside of work as well, with his aging Croatian father and "depressed" teenage daughter moving in, a wife with a waning ballet career and a new Turkish housekeeper, who is in a number of the groups that are discussed on the radio show.

The cast contains a number of well-known strong and impeccable performers, who easily slip into their roles and leave the audience begging for more.

Waters can't be faulted in his role as the headstrong and opinionated radio host. He manages to easily find a balance between being shockingly in-your-face and amusing to show the two sides of Ziggi.

Likewise, Vanessa Downing is delightfully obsessive as Ziggi's psychologist sister, Connie.

Adding to this combination, Edwin Hodgeman is particularly fine as Ziggi's father Marko, Zoe Carides provides both touching and humorous moments as the poor Muslim housemaid Zehra and Octavia Barron-Martin plays both sides of Ziggi's daughter Vivienne to the fullest extent.

Genevieve Hegney is appropriately snobby and self-obsessed in the difficult role of Ziggi's second wife Carmela, but is overshadowed in a number of poignant scenes with the more experienced cast members.

The set is beautifully designed, particularly the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour, and the lighting provides some nice contrasts and added to the mood of each scene.

This is a stellar State Theatre production and is not to be missed by fans of great drama.