



# Adelaide Theatre Guide

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## **JEWELS ON BLACK VELVET** and **NO EXIT**

**Burnside Players**

**Holden Street Theatre**

Until 18 Jun 2011

Review by Maggie Wood

This double bill is something of a departure for Burnside Players. Directed by Fran Edwards\*, both plays invite us to consider the nature of death and the possibilities of the afterlife.

'Jewels on Black Velvet' is a relatively modern play, set at a party in the Adelaide Hills. The main protagonist, 'The Woman' addresses the audience and quickly introduces a puzzle – is this fact disguised as fiction or vice versa? She tells the story of how she killed a man and the events play out before us.

Shelley Hampton as 'The Woman' is confident in the role and tells the story with an element of playfulness. There were some first night nerves but these soon dissipated.

Paul Zechner as 'The Man' soon settled into the role, relating the experiences that took him from dull and domesticated to international terrorist accomplice.

Catlin Mackintosh as 'The Girl' sasses her way into the heart (and pants) of the man, with barely an inkling to the audience of her real intentions.

It's an interesting play and a meaty piece for a director and cast to get their teeth into. It's got a driving narrative that keeps the audience engaged. At times the voices were rather low as to make some words inaudible but it wouldn't take much to push the volume up.

'No Exit' is a play by Jean Paul Sartre that explores the notion that Hell is other people.

Three people are admitted to what seems to be a very civilised Hell, but through their interactions they soon unravel.

It's 90 minutes of button-pushing as each drives the other mad in just the most particular way that would get to the core of each.

Tim Benveniste as The Valet enters the terribly polite drawing room of Hell with his first guest, and from there it is game on.

Aaron MacDonald\* as Vincent Cradeau has ended up in hell for his infidelity to his saintly wife, and with a similarly lustful outlook Jennifer Piper as Estelle Delaunay has also ended up there. While these two characters divert their attentions now and again with their common interest, it is Kristin Telfer as Inez Serrano who, while similarly vile, tries at least to squeeze some honesty from them for their situation. All three played their part well for by the end of it this reviewer thought them well suited to their destiny of damnation.

It is something of a marathon seeing the two plays together. They are both dense, quality scripts that provoke thought and it would have been good to be able to savour them individually. However this may be merely a personal preference and it does nothing to take away from the fact that Burnside Players have delivered a satisfying evening of entertainment.

\* Fran Edwards and Aaron MacDonald are reviewers for Adelaide Theatre Guide