

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

REDchilli Theatre Company Inc & Blackwood Players Inc

Goodwood Institute

Until July 23

Review by Simon Slade

A woman disappears. Four marriages are drawn into a tangled web of deceit, sex and death. Two couples meet to attempt clandestine affairs. One woman struggles to understand why she flees commitment. One man may or may not have killed a woman he picked up on a deserted highway.

Written by Andrew Bovell, co-author of the acclaimed film "Strictly Ballroom," the play was the basis for his screenplay for the award-winning film, "Lantana," but there are things which can be imparted powerfully on the stage which are inevitably changed by film, and the desire of film makers not to be too wordy and to have lots of action.

"Speaking In Tongues" is a raw drama dealing with real people hurting and being hurt, not because they are evil, but because they have weaknesses which betray their own best interests despite their struggles to attain satisfaction.

Director, Geoff Brittain, has obtained admirably precise work from his quartet of actors (each doubling, or in one case tripling, roles) so that Bovell's synchronisations and alternations are instant-perfect without ever sacrificing actual characterisation.

The design, not credited to anyone in particular, is simple yet effective in reinforcing the mirroring of character and plot. The only thing that took the edge off this show was the lighting. It was as though the lights were focussed when the set was put in, without regard to the blocking, so when characters move away from items of furniture they are in partial darkness.

The parallel speech and action in the beginning is breathtaking, and all handled with satisfying professionalism by four of the best actors in Adelaide. All four were outstanding. Tony Busch, Jean Walker, Peter Davies, and Bronwyn Ruciak really make you believe in these characters and the trials that they are facing in their lives. All four create multi-faceted characters in their multiple roles, and each one is different.

This play is one of the finest shows to grace the stage in Adelaide. See it!