

## **THE TOWER**

### **Adelaide Repertory Theatre**

Arts Theatre, Angas Street, Adelaide

Review by Fran Edwards

The Tower is advertised as an unabashed melodrama. There was murder and thunder and plenty of lightning and storm, but the melodrama was sadly lacking.

The very wordy script was handled well; for the most part by the performers but Brenton Whittle's direction lacked the edge required for suspense and under used the melodramatic elements in the script.

Set in Hobart town before federation, the story has all the elements for a potboiler. Older man returns home with new young wife, head strong step-daughter resents replacement of her mother and the adopted son growing up in his image is related to an employee. Sir Rodney Haviland's image and position are everything and he is currently constructing the tallest and most pretentious edifice in the colony to celebrate his Knighthood, the tower of the title.

Kerry Hailstone plays Sir Rodney with a pleasant characterisation, which is complemented well by Ben Nicholson as his adopted son, Edwin, giving a mature showing from this experienced young actor.

Frances Wauchope also gave a strong performance as Rodney's sister, Hester, although she took a while to settle on opening night. Marcus Knight and Kate Cheel gave supported well as the overseer and maid respectively. Considering that she took over the part two weeks before opening, Allison Scharber gave a very rounded Lady Haviland, Rodney's young wife.

The best on the night was Nicholas Ely as Tom Perry the step-daughter's painfully shy suitor. His performance stood out. On the other hand Natalie Shinnars as the pursued just missed the mark, seeming a little lost in the early scenes but improved in the second act.

In all there were good performances, in a well costumed production, on a remarkably good set, which should not have resulted in the tedious evening endured.