

Dinner with Friends

Written by Katherine Ters and Eva Schatz

Images courtesy of the Darlinghurst Theatre

The intimate Darlinghurst Theatre in Potts Point is a fitting venue for Fishy Production's *Dinner with Friends* – a play in which director Kim Hardwick opens a window into the lives of two couples.

Dinner with Friends' Pulitzer-winning script by New York writer Donald Margulies exposes the complexities and blurred boundaries within the relationships of four people, when an unexpected divorce destabilises their equilibrium.

Gabe (Anthony Grgas) and Karen (Rebecca Rocheford Davies) are food journalists – the perfect couple, who seem to have everything together, except perhaps for an overly fastidious obsession with food.

With the audience and actors both comfortably sipping their glasses of wine, the play opens with a casual dinner around the kitchen table, a gathering which soon degenerates into an hour of uncomfortable truths as Beth (Rachel Terry) reveals to Gabe and Karen that her marriage to Tom – David Terry, her real-life partner – is over.

Gabe and Karen feel their familiar surroundings crumble, underlying tensions bubble to the surface, and as the characters begin to question their life choices and the security of their relationships, the audience can't help but do the same.

This well executed and tightly portrayed production is engaging and funny. Through a mixture of light banter and serious conversation it throws up existential dilemmas and highlights the difficulties of keeping the momentum going in long-term relationships and friendships.

The powerful performances of Rebecca Rocheford Davies and David Terry stand out. She, as the controlling but strong and loving wife, and he as the philandering bloke, who leaves his wife after coming to the revelation that family life was never something he wanted. Terry's brutal confessions and his portrayal of Tom's suffering and conviction are both disturbing and touching.

After a successful first season in 2006, Fishy Productions decided to bring *Dinner with Friends* back to the stage. The second season's popularity has built on the reputation of this small actor/writer production company which was founded in 2003 and which now has four notable productions to its name.

Following on from *Dinner with Friends*, Darlinghurst Theatre introduces director Michael Piggott's new production *Pugilist Specialist* – a modern satire which explores the complexity of America in crisis by following the covert assassination operation of a mustachioed Middle Eastern leader code-named “the bearded lady.”

Written by young writer Adriano Shaplin in 2003, when tanks were rolling into Baghdad, *Pugilist Specialist* won the Edinburgh Fringe Award for Best New Writing. It was later performed in London and New York, where it was described by *The New York Times* as “engrossing, inventive ... bound to send the audience out talking.”

Starring Angela Bauer, Michael Denkha and Sam Haft, *Pugilist Specialist* will run at the Darlinghurst Theatre from 26 August through to September 15.

For listings see www.darlinghursttheatre.com