

Love in the tropics

Samuel Spurr
Theatre Review

Launching its ninth season, B Sharp is a unique partnership between Company B (one of Australia's most respected theatre companies) and independent theatre companies. Aiming to develop theatre practice and showcase professional work, B Sharp's 2007 productions include a Pulitzer Prize winning play, a Shakespearean classic and new Australian works.

Anna in the Tropics, written by Nilo Cruz, is B Sharp's first show of the year. Playwright Cruz, born in Cuba before emigrating to the US in the 1960s, won the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for drama with this script, becoming the first Latino to do so. Set in Florida's Ybor City in the 1920s, the city is renowned for its Cuban influences and role in developing America's cigar industry.

A tale of love, family and cigar making in the tropics, the plot revolves around character Juan Julian, a newly-arrived cigar factory lector. Employed by the factory's workers, lectors informed and entertained the skilled, but largely uneducated, cigar rollers as they pursued their

craft. 1929 proves to be an interesting year as Julian's choice of reading material, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, floats across the factory floor, bringing love, desire and jealousy to the workers.

Clever direction by Nicholas Papademetriou and the casting of Zoe Carides, Dina Panozzo and Christina Falsone, ensures that the THEATRON Group showcases Australian actors performing an internationally-acclaimed script.

Stage props supplied by Bogart's House of Fine Cigars add to the production's authenticity.

"Nilo Cruz was thrilled to hear of the Australian premiere of *Anna in the Tropics*," says Director Nicholas Papademetriou. "He was also happy to learn that it included a cast of 'non-Anglos', for whom the characters were created for."

Anna in the Tropics will allow captivated audiences to catch a glimpse of history and fiction blended superbly.

Anna in the Tropics runs from April 19 to May 13. All B Sharp productions appear downstairs at the Belvoir Street Theatre, 25 Belvoir Street, Surry Hills.

Tickets: \$29, Conc. \$23.
Bookings: www.belvoir.com.au or (02) 9699 3444.



Clockwise from top: **Steve Vella, Zoe Carides and Christina Falsone** (with Peita Toppano not in the current production).

Nicholas Higgins