

NOIR THEATRE MEETS COMICAL KARAOKE

If you initialised dramaturg-come-dramatist Victor Kline's first name, you could refer to him as V. Kline. Surprisingly, for an artist with such broad scope and liaison in the very visual medium of performance art, Victor doesn't get the 'cobalt blue' Kline references much. But that's okay, because his work is anything but a shade of blue.

With tongue firmly planted in cheek, and head firmly on shoulders, Kline is a talented all-rounder: businessman (he owns and runs the New Australian Theatre Company with partner Gail Morgan), playwright, director, actor and all-round charmer. Kline has enjoyed seeing the New Australian Theatre Company (NATC) gain a reputation as one of the most cutting edge, clever conglomerates of cross-pollinating entertainment in the country. And he's ecstatic about the rave reviews the NATC has received in the New York press of late (two of the group's productions have already proven successful in NY).



Theatre-goers will get to see the NATC's debut production in Australia — the hilarious yet profound *Doctor Faust Sings* — from June 15 when it opens at The Valhalla Theatre, Glebe. In a nutshell, Kline explains, "*Dr Faust* is the story of a man who sells his soul to the Devil. It's Christopher Marlow's version of the play, but with the boring bits taken out. In their place is a modern story interwoven with Elizabethan themes, about a group of actors who are struggling to put on Marlow's play and who decide the only way to do this for a modern audience is to turn it into a musical, and believe it or not, a night of karaoke."

Basically, then, *Dr Faust Sings* is intertextuality at its campest; a play within a play, but also a musical with many modern twists. It stars Kline himself, blonde bombshell Annalise Braakensiek (as Satan, no less), Alex McTavish, Nicki Novy, Rachael Sherrif (who is looking very Ally McBeal these days), Peter Benedict, and Kay Armstrong. Each actor ultimately becomes one of the Seven Deadly Sins, selecting a member of the audience to assist them in portraying that sin, be it Lust (probably Annalise's sin, but you'll have to wait and see), Envy, Wrath or one of the others.

Though the set on the Valhalla stage isn't *Turandot*, it's certainly far from minimalist. "Minimalist conjures up dull to me," admits Kline. "We don't have practical sets, but we do have powerful sets." A grand cinema screen also features on stage, displaying Dante's Inferno-type projections, montaged to a karaoke soundtrack to which the cast hilariously attempts to keep up with. It's drama, musical, comedy and noir in one. As is the NATC's next production *Valentino Takes Hollywood* which is a musical of the life story of Rudolph Valentino, the first great silent screen icon and Hollywood's first great Latin lover.

Doctor Faust Sings opens June 15 at The Valhalla, Glebe.

For more information and bookings, phone 02 9818 1744 or 02 9300 6211.

Valentino Takes Hollywood will open later in the year.