

THE ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Theatre that leaves you with the taste of anger

THEATRE

By BERWYN LEWIS

Hostages, developed and performed by Faye Bendrups and Alison Richards. Presented by Drama Project Trust, Melbourne. Nimrod Downstairs, tonight, tomorrow and Wednesday at 8 pm.

DOMESTIC violence and how it holds women hostage is the subject of this production.

With a restraint which maintains chilling objectivity, the two performers track down every aspect of the domestic and marital nightmare. They look at the causes (fairy tale myths), the effects (women living in fear of their lives every day within the sanction of marriage) and the statistical and legal implications (the complicated question of self defence and the difference in its definition for men and women).

This production takes the form of a historical bedtime horror story told by a mother to her child. It uses simple images, vignettes of child play, true love and romance and domestic work to reinforce its theme.

Simple props, a series of racks, function as jail walls, confessional bars, grills, screens and weavers' frames through which shameful and poignant facts about the tyranny of families are delivered. From behind little masks of frozen fear, the two performers take on a variety of situations and roles. These range from the simplicity of serving a meal to the sado-masochism of a father forcing his children to eat grass because they're "animals."

Beer cans become the last expression of male virility as their contents trickle into a rubbish tin and the paranoid male laments the conspiracy of women which is stacked against him. "My house," "my kids," "my family," he asserts, but his woman has snatched her children and she's on the run. To where?

Economic dependence holds her hostage inside and outside her home.

A highly provocative, theatre piece that leaves you with the taste of anger.



Faye Bendrups and Alison Richards in *Hostages*, at the Nimrod Downstairs Theatre.