



© Nat Randall in *The Second Woman*. Picture: Heidrun Lohr, supplied Adelaide Festival

FESTIVAL

Adelaide Festival review 2019: The Second Woman

Louise Nunn, *The Advertiser*
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The Second Woman

Theatre / Australia

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL

Space Theatre

March 10-11, 24 hour duration piece

A woman is sitting in a chair behind a scrim on a living room set at the Space Theatre.

Overhead, a pink neon sign spells out *The Second Woman*, the show co-created by Australian theatre makers Nat Randall and Anna Breckon.

The woman, played by Randall, rises slowly from the chair and moves to a corner of the room. A door opens and a man enters.

She knows him well. They sit, drink, eat takeaway noodles and talk.



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Something is said; there's an incident. They dance. Then the woman turns off the stereo and says she thinks he should leave.

And so it goes for 24 hours, as Randall performs the same scene 100 times with 100 male and non-binary volunteers, who all take a different approach.

After each encounter she restores order to the room, in readiness for the next.

Inspired by John Cassavetes' 1977 film *Opening Night*, *The Second Woman* explores gender and its constructs in a surprising way.

From the moment they enter the room, the men – all named Marty – are invariably at sea, the territory unfamiliar.

The audience, on the other hand, finds its bearings quickly, sizing up each Marty as he steps through the door.

There's nice Marty, jokey Marty, angry Marty, all in contrast to Randall, whose composure doesn't waver.



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Live footage from five cameras edited on an adjacent screen adds another dimension to the heightened, cinematic experience.

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Then there's the closing line as each man departs, a choice he makes, designed to crush or uplift, at least in the eyes of the house, which was near capacity at the start. At just under half full at 2am it became more vocal and lively. It dropped to around 20 people at 6am, before filling up again.

Randall's compelling performance and incredible endurance received a standing ovation.

Unforgettable.

- Louise Nunn

