



SQUABBLE: Pieter Bosch Botha and Shaun Acker.

Impeccable sense of dialogue in Spagnoletti's third play

CIVIL PARTING. Written by Nicholas Spagnoletti. Directed by Zanne Solomon, with Shaun Acker and Pieter Bosch Botha. At The Alexander Upstairs until Wednesday at 7pm. **TRACEY SAUNDERS** reviews

RELATIONSHIPS are an intrinsic part of most lives and while the beginning of them is often a joyous occasion, the ending of them can be less so. *Civil Parting* explores the ending of a marriage of seven years.

Two men wait in a lawyer's reception to discuss their amicable

divorce with a lawyer found in the pages of *The Pink Tongue*. What unfolds is less *Waiting for Godot* and more *War of the Roses*; they reminisce, argue, blame, accuse and resurrect past hurts. The pièce de résistance is a physical struggle of acrobatic proportions, which would not appear out of place in a WWE showdown.

Jean-Pierre (Bosch Botha) is a medical doctor with a penchant for young lovers and adventure, while Glenn's (Acker) academic musical career is a more sedate affair. The marriage appears to have ended

with a whimper rather than a bang, and the vestiges of their previous feelings for each other colour much of the conversation with an almost bitter-sweet nostalgia.

Audiences will relate to the squabbling over ownership of never-used camping equipment and unsightly wedding gifts, which acquire a disproportionate sense of importance when being haggled over in a divorce settlement. The parcelling off of mutual friends and the renegotiation of relationships with in-laws are as fraught with bitterness and rancour. The play is

deliciously funny, but not in a slapstick, comedic sense. The sad reality of the divorce lends the piece a sense of poignancy.

This is Spagnoletti's third play and he has an impeccable sense of dialogue and the ability to create believable characters, where you are left pondering their off-stage existence.

The chemistry between the men on stage unfolds with a natural ease. Acker and Bosch Botha establish an intimacy on stage, which they maintain throughout the roller coaster ride of the interminable wait.

The set is a standard waiting room, but it is the costume design that will burn the retina for a few hours after the show.

Civil Parting's witty banter and sharp acting will have you laughing through tears at the sadness of the unravelling of a relationship and questioning whether any divorce, gay or heterosexual, can indeed ever be civil.

● Tickets are R90. To book, call 021 300 1088, or e-mail alexanderbar.co.za There are two performances on Wednesday at 7pm and 9pm. The show returns in November.