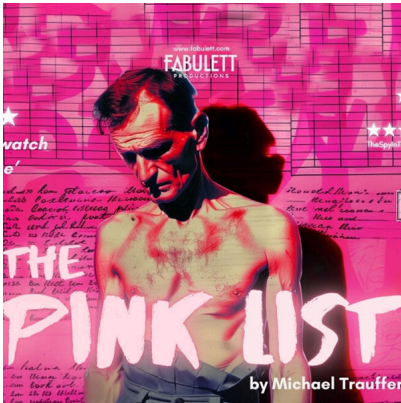




## The Pink List



★★★★★

Adelaide Fringe. Ruby's at Holden Street Theatres. 1 Mar 2026

Five-star ratings are too easily doled out at Fringe festivals; so liberally, at times, that their currency feels devalued. Yet every so often a production emerges that truly deserves it, and *The Pink List* is such a work.

This one-man musical drama examines the organised, state-sponsored persecution of homosexual men in Nazi Germany and, sadly, the unnerving persistence of that persecution in the post-war years. Playwright and performer Michael Trauffer centres the narrative on Karl, a fictionalised composite drawn from the lived experience of real men who endured the horrors of the Third Reich and its aftermath.

The title refers to the infamous registers compiled by the Nazis to identify and target gay men—lists that, shockingly, continued to be used by authorities post-war.

The play opens with Karl on trial, not for any alleged act, but for his identity itself: simply for *being* gay. It was sufficient for imprisonment; during the war it meant deportation to a concentration camp and the enforced wearing of the pink triangle.

As the trial takes its predictable course, the drama unfolds in a series of recollections. Karl remembers the excitement of first love (and the confusion and despair at its loss), the fun of Christmas festivities, the heady freedoms of Weimar cabaret, and the relentless tightening of the Nazi grip.

*The Pink List* is also a musical, and its eleven songs are not merely embellishments but the spine of the storytelling. Trauffer has created it all: he has written music, lyrics and text of remarkable cohesion and theatrical instinct. The songs drive the narrative with elegance and emotional precision, and their stylish musical language traverses excitement to abject fear.

As a performer, Trauffer is nothing short of superb. His singing is secure, nuanced and beautifully phrased; his acting is extraordinary. His diction is crystalline, every word landing with intent. His physicality is masterful, and his expressive face delivers finely calibrated gestures that punctuate every emotion and tear at our hearts.

On the very small stage at Ruby's, he expands the space through sheer presence, inhabiting it with confidence and intelligence. He quickly makes minor changes to his costume, and accesses a few props, just enough to push home a point. Trauffer is in complete control of his craft, but it is not clinical: he gives himself over to the full emotional truth of the text, and it takes your breath away.

This is not comfortable theatre. The material is harrowing. Yet Trauffer imbues Karl with an irrepressible spirit. Amid the brutality, there are flashes of wit, resilience and even joy. It is a testament to the depth of his characterisation that this reviewer found himself unexpectedly smiling at times—moved not by sentimentality, but by the indomitable humanity Trauffer conjures. Yes, Karl is defeated, but at the same time he is victorious.

The production's technical elements are equally distinguished. Voice-overs delineate unseen characters, particularly in the courtroom scenes, while the musical underscoring is expertly created and engineered. Every cue is exact, every transition

seamless. In a festival where technical standards can vary wildly, this production stands as a model of precision and professionalism.

*The Pink List* is essential viewing. It is a work of courage and artistry, delivered by a performer at the height of his powers. Quite simply, it is one of the true highlights of this year's Fringe.

Kym Clayton

When: 20 Feb to 8 Mar

Where: Holden Street Theatres

Bookings: [adelaidefringe.com.au](http://adelaidefringe.com.au)

