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Diary of a Madman, Fringe 2013, Review

By **Irene Brown** - Posted on **14 August 2013**

Show details

Venue: [Quaker Meeting House](#)**Company:** NoPerks Theatre**Running time:** 75mins**Production:** Nikolai Gogol (writer), Mathilde Schennen (director), Rafael Svarin (assistant director), Marco Maldonado (technical director) Nikolai Gogol (writer), Mathilde Schennen (director), Rafael Svarin (assistant director), Marco Maldonado (technical director)**Performers:** Miro Caltagirone (Poprishchin), Luca Ramella (musician), Igor Stepniewski (musician), Marco M. (musician)

A tack sharp modern take on a Russian classic.

This production from New York company NoPerks Theatre is based on Nikolai Gogol's 1835 short story of the same name.

Poprishchin is a civil servant- a titular counsellor to be exact. Among the complex strata of Russian society of the time, this is mediocre. Being privy to his diary, we discover that he fantasises about how these classes conduct their lives. The diary also charts his love of a woman outwith his class and records his finding a talking dog along with a correspondence between it and another canine. In despair, poor Poprishchin finally decides that he is in fact Ferdinand VIII, the missing King of Spain as we are witness to his tragic elision into a tortured world of madness.

The performance starts under dim lights and with a crescendo of discordance played by musicians from the acclaimed Swiss band Puts Marie that provide avant garde music and sound effects that help create the edginess that permeates this highly physical interpretation. At one point the music is so overpowering that it drowns the narrative, but only once!

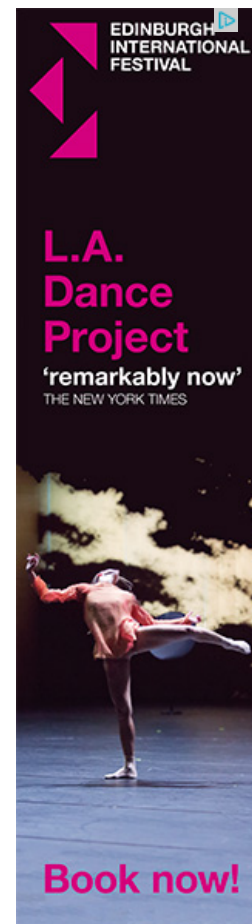


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Miro Caltagirone gives a fine in-the-skin performance of this pitiable, deluded man. He looks like a young Anthony Perkins, who famously played another much more sinister kind of madman.

There is a sense that the stage at this particular venue is just too small for this actor with the giant talent. It seems to constrain him as at times he walks right off set. Nothing wrong with that per se, but the feeling of his being constrained by the venue was there. It is testament to Mathilde Schennen's direction that it worked as well as it did. By the end, Caltagirone looked emptied, as though part of his own soul has been wrenched through his portrayal of the tragic delusion of a misfit.

The curtain is lifted at one point to reveal glittering set fairy lights to represent the delightful parts his fantasy world. Poprishchin's poor mind freely interchanges Spain and China and refers to a map of Africa that hangs on the back wall, treating it as the entire world. This is delightfully reminiscent of the song from the late great Michael Marra with the fabulously surreal lyrics, If Dundee was Africa.

This interpretation of Diary of a Madman, that was influenced by the company's experience as immigrants in New York has already been performed to acclaim in New York, Biel and Zurich and is scheduled to show in Portland, Oregon in September 2013.

Show times

7-10, 12-17 Aug, 20:20

Tickets

£9.50 (£8)

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