

Diary of a Madman



Sense in Madness

Venue Number 40. Quaker Meeting House, 7 Victoria Terrace, EH1 2JL. 5-17 August 20:20 (1 hour 15 minutes). Suitability: 12+.

'Something very peculiar happened today'. So starts Poprishchin's devastating plummet into madness. NoPerks Theatre brings Nikolai Gogol's *Diary of a Madman* to life with a contemporary touch and a frenzied feel. The international theatre company thunderously dramatizes a man's deteriorating grip on reality, catalyzed by the timeless conditions of unrequited love and status anxiety. Told in a long, resonating monologue Poprishchin (Miro Caltagirone) raves about crooked civil servants, letters written by dogs, and his infatuation with his director's daughter, all while wildly whirling around the stage, tearing it asunder. Miro Caltagirone plays the character of Poprishchin with remarkable intensity, speaking to the audience with great earnest. He boldly locks one into his stare and somehow manages to pull us into his nightmare. His acting is so explosive you find yourself laughing at anything that is remotely funny to break the spell of boiling tension. This performance is a testament of Caltagirone's ability, as he does not give a retrospective account, but his madness is delivered in a direct and palpable way.

It is as if director Mathilde Schennen decided to harmonize everything to perfection in compensation for the fragmented and erratic monologue. The lighting is extremely evocative, creating a sense of inescapably

interrogation. They create long splintered shadows of Caltagirone which fill the stage, reflecting the fractures of the mind. Equally, the music provided by Luca Ramella, Igor Stepniewski and Marco M. powerfully complement the theme of madness. The trio sit on stage with an impressive array of instruments, adding even more depth to the performance. Their very obvious stage presence could be seen as the mechanical workings of the mind. The original score is peppered throughout, at all the appropriate intervals, peculiarly harmonizing chaos. It is purposely discordant, serving as a tool to convey a mood that could not be achieved through words alone.

Diary of a Madman is a stimulating and resonating performance. NoPerks Theatre brings together all the right components to make Gogol's short story modern and poignant. They have mastered a sense of troubling intimacy and discomfort which is not easy to forget.

[Maria Regina Whelan]