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FringeNYC Review: His Majesty, The Devil – A Play With Music

Last updated: 08/21/2014



Arnaud Ghillebaert, Colin Pip Dixon, and MacIntyre Dixon in "His Majesty, The Devil" at FringeNYC. Photo by Rodney Damon II.

*'I think the devil doesn't exist, but man has created him, he has created him in his own image and likeness.'* Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*

*His Majesty, The Devil* is a family affair. The actors playing the Visitor (MacIntyre Dixon) and the Young Man (Colin Pip Dixon) are father and son. The playwright is the late Alexandra Devon, wife of MacIntyre and mother of Colin. The younger Mr. Dixon has also composed the music, for violin and viola. Inspired by Dostoyevsky, the play, presented as part of the New York International Fringe Festival, seeks answers to several age old questions. Does the devil exist? Why is there suffering? How do we bear it?

Want answers? The Visitor, aka The Devil, will gladly give them to you! He's been summoned by the Young Man who's in the throes of an existential crisis and keeping the demons at bay with medication. Director Mathilde Schennen has the actors on stage so the audience is peeking into another world as they wait for the show to begin. The Devil sits in an armchair reading, the Young Man's sprawled on the floor under a blanket, in despair. The Shadow (Arnaud Ghillebaert), dressed in concert attire, a

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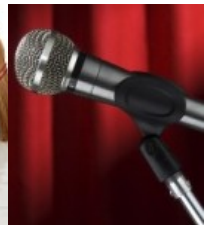


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viola tucked under his arm, observes them as he moves from place to place with a sense of stillness. As the lights dim, he begins to play music reminiscent of a Bach unaccompanied Partita.

Mr. Ghillebaert is a brilliant violinist. He weaves a wordless story with beautiful tone, haunting phrases and the occasional vocal harmony. Colin Pip Dixon plays the Young Man with painful intensity and his excellent violin playing underscores his character's search for meaning. A gifted composer, he's created a musical web for the play to rest upon. The jagged patterns and melodic leaps as the violin and viola dialogue give a Hindemith meets Shostakovich feel to his music.

The main character of *His Majesty*, however, is the Devil, and MacIntyre Dixon's performance is breathtaking -- boldly theatrical, passionate, truthful. This Devil doesn't carry a pitchfork, have a tail, or wear red. No, he is charming, with a twinkle in his eye and a few insecurities, especially about God; he also dearly loves earth, would like to go to church and is keenly interested in taking one of those pills that the young man seems dependent upon.

Uncle Drosselmeyer hair spilling onto his shoulders, he chants om, sings songs, dances a little jig, and he expostulates on the nature of thought. He tries to explain that in order to have creation we must have destruction and that his role is to deny life, peace, health, love, and other good things. It's not his fault. He's just doing his job.

The play ends ambiguously, but the Devil does give us the truth. We must have darkness to know light.

**The New York International Fringe Festival continues through August 24. For more reviews of FringeNYC shows, [click here](#).**



MacIntyre Dixon and Arnaud Ghillebaert in "His Majesty, The Devil" at FringeNYC. Photo by Rodney Damon II.

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**Navida Stein**  
 Navida Stein is a NYC based storyteller, actress, musician & writer.

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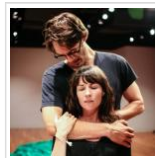
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