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Firecrackers in a Rope - Interior: Panic/Portrait of a Madonna

Published **Friday 15 March 2013** at **17:32** by **Catherine Usher**

Two women struggle with mental illness at different times of life and with contrasting results in Tennessee Williams' pair of single act plays.

In *Interior: Panic*, which was written the year before *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche Shannon (Jaymie Addicott) is staying with her fresh-faced sister Grace (Clare Harlow) and sensual, smouldering brother-in-law Jack (Harry Anton), as she reveals to them how her life has disintegrated around her. Even though the voices in her head and the delusional conversations she imagines are portrayed on stage, there is a powerful simplicity to the piece, which contrasts Blanche's highly-strung, unpredictable nature with that of her stable, dependable sister.

In *Portrait of a Madonna*, there is much more of a sense of foreboding and finality about the plight of the elderly Miss Lucretia Collins who is locked into a world where she will forever be a young damsel in distress. Victoria Kempton is impressively tragic in the role and the clever use of girlish ribbons in her hair is particularly poignant. Dermot Dolan's heart-warming portrayal of the compassionate Porter who attends to her is understated yet effective.

Although brief in running time, this absorbing double bill is brimming with high quality performances and gripping material. The themes of desire, sexual repression, mental illness and the pressure on women to behave as paragons of virtue are thought-provoking and challenging. Prepare to be impressed.

2 people recommend this.

 4

Production information

Pentameters Theatre, London, March 12-31

Author: Tennessee Williams

Directors: Sebastien Blanc/Seamus Newham

Producer: Leonie Scott-Matthews

Cast: Jaymie Addicott, Clare Harlow, Harry Anton, Liam Nooney, Dermot Dolan, Victoria Kempton, Seamus Newham

Running time: 1hr

Production information displayed was believed correct at time of review. Information may change over the run of the show.

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