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Review: Triptych, Barbican Theatre

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London International Mime Festival

Summary

Unmissable!

Audacious, illusory disruptive and totally glorious, Triptych is not merely a phenomenal piece of dance theatre, but a truly mind-altering experience.

Here at the **Barbican** it's the **London Mime Festival**, which celebrates non-verbal work and explores the different ways in which human beings communicate with and understand one another. I've seen some weird stuff recently, but nothing compares to Belgian dance theatre company [Peeping Tom](#)'s *Triptych*.

Conceived and directed by **Gabriela Carrizo** and **Franck Chartier**, it is a phenomenal work that totally defies description, so writing a review has proven tricky. I was genuinely stunned by the show; overwhelmed by the exciting talent presented and its gloriously ambitious achievement. It left me looking at the world differently (in fact, afterwards I felt like I was high on drugs!).

This is, as the name suggests, a three part piece. It's set in an ocean liner, with people dancing in the space. And that information is the only constant going forward. *Triptych* seriously disrupts normality and expectation, until you are uncertain what time you're in, what's real

and unreal. The space changes from corridors to a bedroom, to an outer courtyard across the three sections, with bizarre, outlandishly spectacular and surprising occurrences as the performance takes us beneath the surface, exploring the possibilities of a darker side to what initially seems familiar.

Events are not linear, but are episodic, reversed, distorted. The exceptional dancers are beyond extraordinary, their bodies undertaking wonderfully freakish shapes; extending, morphing and connecting with each other. **Panos Malactos**, flat on the floor, bounces repeatedly, moves swiftly across the stage, before hurtling upwards against the wall. And again. And again. A door opens and an imaginary wind sweeps the ensemble across the stage, tumbling over each other like leaves, in a battle with their environment. I saw people become objects, and objects inexplicably come alive, shifting the boundaries of reality and making the impossible possible. It's completely breath-taking and awe inspiring.

Time becomes uncertain as actions repeat, rewind, and overlap. After the first section the set is dismantled before the audience, but some characters remain in view: memories and remnants of previous events linger inappropriately and unsettlingly as the scene changes. I desperately wanted to interpret what was happening and find a narrative; to connect the events logically. But understandings of time and space became confused. It was like living through a dream. Eventually I allowed myself to be immersed in the wonder of it all, becoming a 'Peeping Tom' too. I witnessed surreal occurrences, murder, brutality, love, sex, 'Exorcist' moments in a nightmarish world that examines those grubby unspoken parts of life. Juxtaposing this is wonderful humour: a maid (**Wan-Lun Yu**) gets trapped out in the snow in her underwear, and is brought in frozen solid. There's audience laughter from sheer incredulity at the astonishing physical accomplishment of the performers.

The staging (**Gabriela Carrizo** and **Justine Bougerol**) is audacious and illusory; at times epic, like an oil painting. The fragile theatricality of the world we perceive is exposed as the set is deconstructed before us and a new reality built. Walls and doors are solid, then have no substance. Meanwhile, huge, accusatory and blinding cinematic lamps spotlight events, magnifying their importance, and projections create new spaces or fire. Astonishing sound work is visceral, activating the auditorium and our bodies in a new way. Sometimes there's bewitching classical music, or an occasional abstracted spoken phrase, so language is described differently.

The sheer talent, grandeur and disruption transported me utterly. At its triumphant close, I was desperate to see more of this addictive work. As I exited into the night the peculiar, hallucinatory performance was still part of me. I looked differently at the world and the passers-by; the lights, the sounds of the world. I left the production behind but took new understanding and possibilities with me.

Source: <https://everything-theatre.co.uk/2023/02/review-triptych-barbican-theatre/?fbclid=IwAR0Ea0jMMic5sH6cxSXgjJHCikzFzRjW-kXqwnUUoClnHcEKc-rcRwII8>
