

the music



Windigo @ Dancehouse

11 May 2019 | [Augustus Welby](#)

''Windigo' is a confronting and somewhat absurd spectacle with socio-political implications. It isn't light entertainment." Pic by Frederic Chais.

It takes only a little research to learn Lara Kramer productions aren't conventionally charming pieces of live dance. The Montreal-based choreographer is of Oji-Cree and settler heritage, which backgrounds *Windigo*. Presented in partnership with the YIRRAMBOI Festival, *Windigo* is a confronting and somewhat absurd spectacle with socio-political implications. It isn't light entertainment.

The setting is northwestern Ontario, although this is made apparent only via the program. The performance revolves around the unpredictable actions of Jassem Hindi and Peter James, who are both in the throes of insanity and desperation.

The work begins with a tension-building period of stillness and fading light. The soundtrack is incidental white noise – sounds of ticking, brushing, sweeping and distant chatter – as bodies lie on mattresses. Once motion is injected, you realise the earlier stillness represented not peace but remission.

Over the next hour, Hindi and James are at war with the single mattresses. They slash, drag, eat from and penetrate them. The mostly bare stage also features a large pile of discarded clothing and a long sheet of plastic wrapping. Hindi and James approach all objects with volatility – one moment they're set on destruction, the next they're displaying perverse tenderness.

Such fierce impulsiveness can either make you laugh or quiver, and at times it's objectively funny. But for the most part it stirs a sense of danger and a feeling of powerlessness. You don't necessarily pity the characters, but you know the damage they've encountered can't be simply expunged.

The audio remains white noise aside from two separate 60-second snippets of popular music. There's also a brief clip of someone describing Canadian PM Justin Trudeau as not being all he's cracked up to be where Indigenous issues are concerned.

Windigo offers no resolve, but things calm down as the light again fades, however, the violence stays with you long after its conclusion.