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SUMMERHALL

Native Girl Syndrome

6 AUGUST 2019

A powerful, challenging statement about prejudice told with style and imagination

Native Girl Syndrome is a unique piece of theatre that captures prejudice, pain and social exclusion. Through almost no dialogue and on a stage littered with, well, litter, [Lara Kramer](#) directs a show that combines moments of curiosity, power and tragedy to create a depiction of suffering like no other.

The two performers feel burdened by their bodies, staggering laboriously around the stage. Their slow, broken movements captures their pain with uncomfortable realism. The only time one of them speaks beyond murmurs is when they pick up a microphone, as if it symbolises the power to have a voice in a strange, unforgiving place.

The two characters are deliberately disconnected, but their eventual confrontation sheds light on the oppression that they are exposed to. It can be difficult to watch, but over time it becomes startlingly clear that this play carries an urgent message. With tiered seating, the audience are looking down on this dismay and we are encouraged to recognise the privileged positions from which we observe others. It is an intelligent use of the venue for a performance that is challenging and provocative.

The show is based on the experience of Kramer's grandmother moving from rural Canada to an urban jungle. It grapples with the dehumanisation that First Nations People can experience when they are cast into the social gutter. Alone, impulsive and absent, their self-destruction plays out within a climate of disorientation and discrimination. To tell this story in such a unique, dynamic and physical form of theatre is remarkable.

This is an incredibly brave production, both thematically and technically. With few words, *Native Girl Syndrome* leaves a lasting impression and awareness. The physical and social struggles of First Nations People are portrayed in a way that provokes the audience to think and to pay attention to those in need. Quietly remarkable and vying to be heard, Kramer's show is an essential addition to the festival and an example of stylistic impulse being excellently matched with modern relevance.



JAMES HANTON

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2 - 11 AUG 2019