



love u lovecraft @ Bain St-Michel

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Inspired by the eerie works of American sci-fi/horror master author H.P. Lovecraft, The Other Theatre's *love u lovecraft* defines itself as a collective work whose goal is "to create and experience a collage of associations rather than a narrative." The performance is being presented as a public lab, meaning it's a work-in-progress that uses the audience as beta-tester to see what parts of the show work and what parts need to be tweaked before its November 2013 run. Lucky for them, most of it works, as this experimental piece is both engaging and genuinely creepy.

Director Stacey Christodoulou takes the audience on a surreal journey, one with a jumbled trajectory and blurred lines between past and present. We meet Clara, a woman with an odd history whose daughter seems to have gone missing from their wooded backyard. As the play unravels, we delve into Clara's past and meet a strange group of characters – both vocal and disturbingly mute. Through a series of intentionally disjointed scenes, the show explores themes of helplessness, bullying, escapism, and revenge.

The cast is exceptionally strong, each member bringing a genuine spark to the different characters they portray and interacting with one another effortlessly. Standouts include Sara C. Carlsen, who is utterly riveting in her delivery and Anana Rydvald, whose spastic, jagged movements are highly effective in creating an unnerving atmosphere. Movement plays a key role in this show, and the cast's strong physicality presents jarring transitions from fluid to spastic, creating stimulating and varied visuals.

The show is weird, but beautifully so. The benefit to presenting a series of dreamy vignettes is that, once the audience surrenders to the non-linear storyline, they can simply enjoy the ride. My only criticism is that the mosaic needs to be reigned in a little, as even the strange requires some sense of coherence. The show could benefit from losing a few of its more obscure bits, such as the separate monologues about milk, apples and the year 1973.

With a terrific set design by Amy Keith – great use of a chalkboard – and highly effective lighting by David Perreault Ninacs, *love u lovecraft* never gets annoyingly overdramatic or intense – a risk when dabbling in the bizarre. It presents itself confidently and is a worthwhile, relevant piece of theatre.

The show only runs until April 20th, so get in on the weird while you can. All shows are at Bain St-Michel (5300 St-Dominique) at 8pm. Tickets are pay-what-you-can.

-Andrea Stanford