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REVIEW: THE MOORS, SEYMOUR CENTRE, SYDNEY

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Romy Bartz and Enya Daly in *The Moors*. Photo: Clare Hawley

Part parody and part black comedy, *The Moors* is a tightly crafted 80-minute piece that has laugh-out loud moments. The title refers to the windswept landscape that is indelibly associated with the isolated Bronte sisters, and like many a gothic (or mock gothic) tale, this one has someone, possibly bonkers, locked away in the attic.

But you'll be surprised when you find out who it is.

A doom-ridden score opens the proceedings, which take place on a circular stage with plenty of black, grey and silver to put us (briefly) in a sombre mood (courtesy of sound designer Nate Edmondson and lighting designer Fausto Brusamolino) and there are plenty of musical clichés throughout to up the quirky ante.

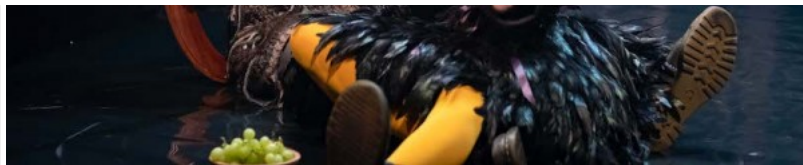


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Thomas Campbell and Alex Francis in The Moors. Photo: Clare Hawley

Following correspondence between herself and Branwell, Emilie (Brielle Flynn) arrives to take up the position of governess in the house on the forbidding moors, where she meets the severe and domineering Agatha (Romy Bartz) and her younger sister and would-be novelist Huldey (Enya Daly). There is also a maid (or two), both played to great comic effect by Diana Popovska, who turns from Mallory to Margery in the blink of an eye (and the change of a mobcap). There's also Mastiff, a depressed dog, but more of him in a minute. Of Branwell, there is no sign whatsoever.

This is not a retelling of a Bronte tale. It's a delightfully subversive take on women's roles and the way they are seen; of love and desperation; loneliness and self-interest; and the question of what is happiness. The fact the most meaningful conversations about much of this take place between the Mastiff (Thomas Campbell makes a fine large canine here) and an injured Moor-Hen (Alex Francis is the rightly suspicious bird who is also a real featherbrain) makes the telling very funny.

There is also a murder, with an axe, in the parlour. Of course, there is.

Without tight direction and great performances, The Moors could easily be lame. This production at the Reginald Theatre is anything but. Under Kate Gaul's direction everything works a treat and the cast is uniformly excellent, although Daly's manic yet naïve girl-woman Huldey is a highlight.

Horror has never been so horribly funny.

The Moors is at [the Seymour Centre](#), Chippendale, until March 1.

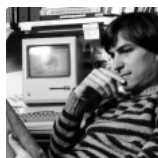
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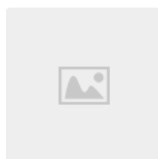
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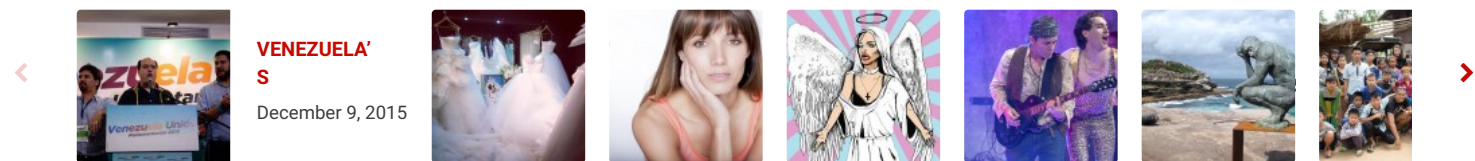


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