

The Lichtenstein Nursing Home Massacre

By [Nicole Eckersley](#) | Monday October 1 2012



If anyone makes a face or rolls their eyes when you're going to see some puppetry at the Melbourne Fringe Festival, silence them with a raised eyebrow and a cold stare, because puppetry is *awesome*. Or at least, *this* puppetry is awesome.

If Alfred Hitchcock, Agatha Christie, Mary Shelley, John Carpenter and Chuck Jones worked in the medium of papier-mâché, they might have produced *The Lichtenstein Nursing Home Massacre*. Lemony S's production, written by Sarah Kriegler with John Paul Fishbach, makes glorious, loving, hand-painted mockery of every film noir and murder mystery trope, with the audience in stitches from what seemed like the very first moment.

In this mostly wordless production, we follow the fortunes of the Lichtenstein Nursing Home, as its eccentric staff and residents begin to be murdered in a variety of interesting and sordid ways. A combination of spot-on physical comedy, neat puppets and inspired props provides non-stop amusement. The occasional bit of wonky scenery is the only sign of what must be total chaos backstage, with puppeteers Christian Bagin, Tim Denton and Jacob Williams squeezed behind a tiny set, and apparently possessing at least three arms each.

In a work without much in the way of dialogue, the plot is largely directed by the brilliant choices of music: film scores, iconic arias, incidental music and sound effects mean that while we might not be able to follow the exact dialogue, the tone of each scene is so perfectly set that it's not really necessary. (To be fair, the puppeteers really should have been miked – no doubt a budget decision, and hopefully one that will be rectified when this show gets the overbudgeted restaging it squarely deserves.) Also, a warning to the blurry of vision: take your spectacles along, or make sure you secure a spot in the front row – there are a few fine-print visual gags that are not to be missed.

I must confess here that when I began the show, I was laughing so hard that I thought I couldn't give it anything less than four and a half stars: I'm sad to say I've had to shave it down to a mere four stars, because, as someone mentioned, 'There were... pacing issues,' or as I would put it, 'It did go on, rather'. Having worked out whodunnit from the (not-too-subtle) clues somewhere around the halfway mark of this 80-minute production, the remaining 40 minutes were a bit unnecessary, and filled with confusing incidents that I now see were meant to be red herrings. Luckily, the puppetry is so good that it's really impossible to complain about getting more of it, and I look forward to handing back that half a star by the time the Comedy Festival rolls around.

The Liechtenstein Nursing Home Massacre

Reviewed by Cameron Woodhead
Published: October 1, 2012 - 3:42PM

Lemony S, La Mama, Until October 7; \$15-\$25

Advertisement

Puppetry and slasher horror unite in this slick, mischievous offering from the boutique puppet-makers and performers at Lemony S.

Taking advantage of the high body count the use of puppet actors can afford, the show features a large cast of geriatrics trapped in a nursing home, as a masked intruder murders them all one by one in inventively gruesome ways.

Unbeknown to these eccentric old ducks, they're sitting on top of a deranged doctor with a secret lab. And the sinister, exceptionally long-lived dynasty that runs the place seems to be in on the action.

The puppets are cute, the storyline madcap, the violence liberal, and the puppeteering (in particular its visual comedy) is clever and engaging.

The Liechtenstein Nursing Home Massacre takes the spirit of *Punch and Judy* and reincarnates it through the prism of genre film.

This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/theatre/the-liechtenstein-nursing-home-massacre-20120930-26th5.html>

Please see also:

<http://theatrepress.com.au/2012/09/29/review-the-lichtenstein-nursing-home-massacre/>