

Fractious symphony of revolutions

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Captives of the City **Chamber Made Opera and Lemony S Puppet Theatre** **Arts Centre, until February 14**

Throughout its 25-year history Chamber Made Opera have created epic shows in impossible spaces, from tiny theatres to living rooms. Their latest, created with long-time collaborators Lemony S Puppet Theatre, takes its audience into the bowels of the Arts Centre.

"Thank you for accepting the invitation," says a mysterious guide (Adam Pierchalski). A broadcast is to take place from the spire, but it's unclear if the musicians have been enlisted by choice or behest.

Abrasive crescendos challenge the guide's commands, creating a musical tête-à-tête between control and insurgence. Baleful white noise from Jethro Woodward is interrupted by percussionist Matthias Schack-Arnott literally rattling the bars of his cage, while double bassist Mark Cauvin manipulates the instrument's limits. What transmits can also receive, and their fractious symphony is violated by an alien signal. Digital glitches coalesce into a rodent occupation of the bunker. As an act of digital puppetry it's astounding, requiring feats of coding and of rigging projectors, but tension dissipates in the face of an indeterminate narrative.

Suggestions of invasion, revolution and technological apocalypse are abstracted, letting the audience fill in the gaps between allusions to the role of the artist in resistance and the ruling party's struggle to retain the status quo.

We only later learn that the vermin's trails of sonic and textual detritus are fragments of revolutionary poetry, as well as graffiti and chants taken from Egypt's Tahrir Square. Yet it's not hope that lingers but a vague paranoia of technology's ability to be hacked, co-opted, corrupted.



Captives of the City. Photo: Gary LaPersonne

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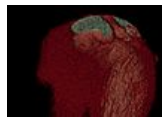
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