

**Daydream****Cultural Imaginary Prods.—MTC Up the Alley**

This play has an interesting plot considering the timely topic of video game addiction. This mother/son pair are very believable together. The program blurb says “relentlessly paced” and it is, too much so. The son’s deterioration seemed to happen too quickly.

Since the show ended almost a half hour earlier than its stated 90-minute running time, they could have developed the son’s descent into insanity more fully. Worth seeing.

Lisa Campbell

**Mother of Invention****6—Rachel Browne Theatre**

While it’s hard to describe anything 6 does as formulaic—this will be the Fringiest thing you see this year if you go—the brave handful who saw last year’s *Erosion* will have a pretty good idea what to expect from *Mother of Invention*.

Film, featuring silent-movie-style captions, is projected on one wall, which main performer Charla Ramsey wordlessly acts and dances in front of and occasionally even interacts with, while main conceptualist Brian Longfield provides rather avant-garde guitar accompaniment on the side. There are many stylized papier-mâché masks involved, and the only human voice you’ll hear consists of occasional wordless vocals from Longfield (who I hope will forgive me for calling him “Longfield”; it’s the sort of thing you do in reviews, even for people you’ve known for a long time!).

In this case, the storyline—on the surface a woman and a robot meeting and conversing on a bridge, plus twist ending—seems to be about the blurring distinction between humans and machines (how many people refer to their iPhone or netbook as their “brain”?), but I must admit I didn’t try too hard to analyze it beyond that. The narrative is a little more conventional than that of *Erosion*, but that isn’t saying much; I’ve already mentioned that



photo by Leif Norman

*Violence and horror resonate in this not at all tame version of The Taming of the Shrew.*

this is a weird show, but it bears repeating.

The pacing is the main problem I had with this particular production. With *Erosion*, something was nearly always happening; but this show has some long stretches with nothing really going on, especially near the beginning. It’s only 45 minutes according to the program, but could easily afford to be even leaner. Sort of related to this, there is a key fact about the connection between the two characters that is never explicitly stated, but that most viewers will figure out about a third of the way through. This would be fine, except that (at least with me) it made me impatient for them to get to the “twist” ending I thought was coming, exacerbating the pacing issues. (There is a twist ending but it’s not the one most of the audience will expect, or it

wouldn’t be much of a twist.)

Beyond that, odd as it may sound with regard to such an off-beat show, I felt like I’d seen much of it before, done better. *Erosion* used the same off-beat method of storytelling, but with significantly more cleverness and humour. In particular, the interactions between the live actor and the films were much more interesting in the *Erosion*’s production.

If you haven’t seen 6’s shtick before, take a chance on this show. You might very well like it; and even if you don’t, at least you’ve tried a more experimental piece of theatre. But if you’ve seen them before, this show has—apart from what seems to me to be an improvement in Brian’s guitar playing—little new for you.

Jeff Heikkinen

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