

doing that?' or 'How did I get so great at outfits?' and other dazzling gems of soliloquy kinda makes me a bad person. But! I am 90 percent of the time able to repress my primal lipstick reapplication urges and they end up working in my favour because I can look at some abstract colour block post-minimal thing for even longer than I would without the narcissistic subtext and go through a more abstract-seeming range of emotional response (especially when they're curved surfaces, because that's some traumatic funhouse mirror shit with which I do not have nearly enough self esteem to deal).

That sort of thing gets me to the 'eccentrically intense' point on the weirdo scale, a sometimes respected and/or rewarded position. What tips me over into full-on pointed-out-to-people, mocked-on-the-internet strangeness is my apparently

things too, quite a lot sometimes, but that seems like a less-maligned desire and shouldn't we all try to understand diversity? Adequate representation for all senses! Social responsibility and so on!

We've given smell and touch their turns, so what about the others? Well, the desire to look at art is usually fairly well-received so I think sight's home free. Hearing? Paying attention to the audio component of a work that has one, also good, as is listening to the opinions of people talking about a show. A tick for hearing, then. Thus, lucky last, taste. As a notion, metaphorically, taste is totally up there: having good taste is one of the best things an art-interactor can do. But literal tasting is a pretty big no-no. Even I, with my toddler-equivalent levels of self-control, have never gone so far as to lick an artwork or put it in my mouth. (Until I owned it.)

## THEATRE REVIEW

### CUT

#### Downstairs, Belvoir St Theatre

Duncan Graham's *Cut* seems steeped in the creations of Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami; there is no definition between public and private, reality or dreamlike scapes, each is saturated and bled out amongst the others, a hyper-reality nightmare exploring loneliness and the mind. In this sense it is well suited to the opening of the new Belvoir Downstairs season, director Sarah John's vision of *Cut* realised in bleak and bare-staged confrontation. The extensive blackouts and severe use of shadow in Danny Pettingill's well-designed lighting elicit noir sensibilities, the surreal. And occupying the surreal? The downright scary Anita Hegh. She appears as a

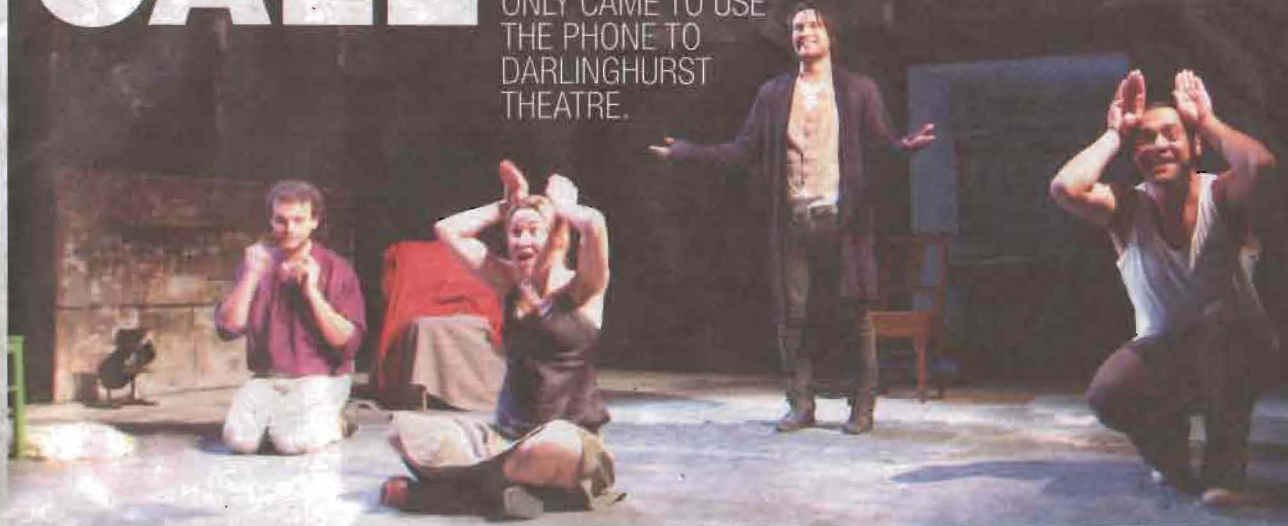
calculated emotional void, one that has felt too much to feel again until it is too late, until – GASP – her time has come. She has perfected the cautious, courteous and overtly polite manner of speaking that defines the delivery by female characters in horror movies. Almost infantile, and with heavily effected vocals she teeters on the edge of sanity. But there is little else for her to do here; a few choice poses struck between blackouts, a single prop and the task of inciting confusion – things begin to feel one-dimensional, despite lasting just 40 minutes. But perhaps that is necessary for a script so boldly diving into mnemonics and psychology. Perhaps we must feel that discomfort.

Until 1 May

DAVE DRAYTON

## MAKING THE CALL

DAVE DRAYTON TALKS TO DIRECTOR NETTA YASHCHIN ABOUT BRINGING GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S *I ONLY CAME TO USE THE PHONE* TO DARLINGHURST THEATRE.



Columbian writer Gabriel García Márquez has long been the poster boy for magic realism, a genre in which the surreal, the fantastical or the mysterious is presented in plenty against a backdrop of the everyday, winning a Nobel Prize for literature in 1982. In 1992 he published *Strange Pilgrims*, a collection of short stories written through the '70s and '80s that are linked through themes of dislocation and the concept of the 'foreign'. *I Only Came To Use The Phone*, the story of a woman unwittingly being admitted to a mental institution after her car breaks down, was part of the collection.

"I originally read it in Israel" says Netta Yashchin, the director who first brought the story to the stage in Adelaide in 2008 after travelling here by way of Lithuania and Israel. "My friend gave it to me before I came to Australia – which was a strange

pilgrimage in itself – I came here as an actor and he suggested I do it as a one-woman show. So I read it on the plane and I thought that's a fantastic story, there are a lot of scenes there that link to my personal life.

"I think it's a great thing to do, to try and stage it as a one-woman show. I like the idea of people living outside of their homeland, outside of their country, outside of their culture in some form of exile. Maybe it's a sadomasochistic thing. It's just at that time I felt I didn't want to be alone on stage," she says with an honest laugh.

There's also the predicament of how densely populated Marquez's fiction is. This short story alone has 36 characters, something that is not unusual in his texts. "Necessity is the mother of invention," Yashchin explains her culling them, not to a one-woman show, but to a cast of actors that includes herself alongside

recent *Brothers Size* star Anthony Taufa and Annabelle Stephenson as the central character of Maria, among others. "When I did the show in Adelaide I only had six actors, so we worked with our abilities and tried to make sure everyone plays five or six characters, except Maria."

A powerful and eventually mentally isolated character, Maria is worthy of exemption. "She's the spine of the show. She's a tragic hero. Her arc from being a very healthy young beautiful girl to being hospitalised, brutalised, raped and 'disappeared'; her journey is the strongest."

Unlike traditional scripts, Yashchin opted to bring Marquez's rich world to the stage in Adelaide, and now Darlinghurst Theatre, unchanged, capturing the element of magic realism by drawing on the practices of Theatre Du Soleil in Paris and Ex Machina in Canada.

"It's not a well-made drama with five acts or three acts; it's a story. I think drama needs new materials and good writing and when you find good writing and it inspires there's no reason why not to do a short story?"

"It has a lot of images, a lot of places for the audience to go to with their imagination so the other thing that was really attractive was to try and adapt the short story to the stage without changing a word."

Consequently, Yashchin has been able to employ Brechtian narration techniques.

**WHAT: *I Only Came To Use The Phone***

**WHERE & WHEN: Darlinghurst Theatre Thursday 28 April to Sunday 1 May**