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I Only Came to Use the Phone

28 Apr-29 May, Theatre Recommended

Behold the nightmare!



published on 8 Dec 2010

This event has finished

The theatre is filled with smoke. A flamenco guitar plays (Damien Wright, underscoring the whole evening) while patrons feel their way to their seats. Through the cloud, five seated figures come in to focus on stage tapping their feet to the music.

Maria (Annabelle Stephenson) is driving home to Barcelona when her car breaks down on a deserted road. Managing to hitch a ride from a bus driver, she is understandably anxious to use a phone to call her husband – but, having fallen asleep on the journey, she's ordered into a line of female patients when she wakes up. Maria has been mistakenly checked in to a mental institution.

The details in Gabriel García Márquez's story are related absolutely matter-of-factly, and that's the way the story is retold here – word for word. The half-dozen performers steer confidently through tricky scene transitions and alternate convincingly between their roles as narrators and a menagerie of some 36 motley characters, including vindictive matrons, twitching inmates and domestic pets.

Netta Yashchin, also directing here, has some curious fourth wall-breaking antics as a repulsive night matron – but, for the most part, Maria's downward spiral is smooth and appropriately painful. Moments of lightness – Julia Billington has her paw-licking and meowing down pat as an unsympathetic feline – only serve to bring out the darkness in the rest of the story.

It's a gripping 90 minutes trapped in Maria's head as the silent witnesses to her plight. Uncomfortable but invigorating theatre – a fine show to come out of one of Sydney's neglected venues.

Words by Natasha Gammell

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Also on at Darlinghurst Theatre

1. Boats - Theatre - 04-16 Jul
2. Boats - Kids - 11-16 Jul
3. Drake the Amazing + La Dispute - Theatre - 20 Jul-14 Aug
4. The Libertine - Theatre - 17 Aug-11 Sep
5. 10,000 Beers - Theatre - 15 Sep-09 Oct
6. No Way to Treat a Lady - Theatre - 13 Oct-13 Nov

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- And They Called Him Mr Glamour
- Neighbourhood Watch
- The Threepenny Opera
- Human Interest Story
- Smashed
- New Electric Ballroom
- The Seagull
- And No More Shall We Part

Other events this day

- Culture and Continuity: Journey through Judaism - Museums & Attractions
- Irish Orphan Girls - Museums & Attractions
- Surviving Australia - Kids
- Convict Sydney - Museums & Attractions
- Jersey Boys - Theatre

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The STC's crack team of thespians continues to give it all they've got



Gale Edwards on La

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