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FESTIVAL Adelaide Festival review 2019: La Reprise

Patrick McDonald, The Advertiser
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La Reprise. Histoire(s) du théâtre

Theatre/Belgium & Germany

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An extraordinary experience which is more densely layered than an onion, *La Reprise* deconstructs the theatre process while reconstructing events of a life and crime to show how each person has their own perspective of a story.

Auditions, stage acting, filmed performances and live documentary camerawork are brilliantly interwoven and simultaneously peeled apart.



It is the first production to follow Swiss director Milo Rau's "Ghent Manifesto" for Belgian company NTGent, which states: "The aim is not to depict the real, but to make the representation itself real".

While its premise is to retell the actual 2012 kidnap and murder of Ihsane Jarfi, a young gay man in Liège, a former steel town with high unemployment, this does not begin until midway through the 90-minute show.



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It opens with Egyptian actor Sabri Saad El Hamisi explaining stagecraft and asking where the character – and the tragedy – begins. In real life, he explains, the dead don't speak.

La Reprise gives the dead voice, through both the characters of those who are left behind, and the actors who inhabit those roles.

We are witness to the audition process as three actors are put through a casting call, sharing their own stories and social circumstances, which will later be cleverly interwoven with the characters they play. Even the DJ's samples later reappear to underscore scenes.

Tom Adjibi, in particular, evokes unexpected laughter with his tales of racial typecasting, and his insertion of local South Australian references into his invented languages.

Events leading up to, following, and during the crime itself are then examined with forensic detail in five acts, from five different viewpoints.

In the first, "The Loneliness of the Living", the victim's parents are literally stripped bare as they share their experiences and emotions long after the murder itself.



© La Reprise media action on stage and screen. Picture: Hubert Amiel, Adelaide Festival

Next, the deceased's partner explains his pain – not by directing anger or hatred toward the perpetrators but by sharing what a good person his late boyfriend was, and showing what they have robbed the world of.

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"The Banality of Evil" brings another actor face-to-face with the killer he plays, only to discover that their mundane lives are almost exactly the same.

Ultimately it is "The Anatomy of the Crime" which proves to be absolutely visceral in its brutal re-enactment of the killing, from the misting rain on stage to the actual car headlights which cut through it.

The first in a proposed series titled *Histoire(s) du théâtre*, *La Reprise* is a powerful, utterly compelling and highly distinctive work which should leave the audience hungry for future instalments.

— Patrick McDonald

