

VICTORIA'S SECRET

DULCINEA LANGFELDER DANCES DREAMS AND BROKEN MEMORIES

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You have to accept one thing before *Victoria*, now playing at Centaur, even starts. You will be entering a dreamscape and as performer/creator Dulcinea Langfelder says, "We don't have 'speak' dreams, 'musical' dreams or 'movement' dreams. We don't have 'traditional' dreams or 'experimental' dreams."

In other words: Abandon categories all ye who enter here.

For a seasoned theatre goer, this is not uncharted territory. Gille Maheu and Carbone 14 explore here, as does, to some extent, Robert Lepage. But this must be said: It's a dangerous, risky place. Dreams (like sex) are laden with mountains of psychological baggage that is utterly personal. How many times, for instance, have you been told someone's dream – a dream that clearly took ten years off the life of that person – and thought, "Could this be more dull?" Even Maheu, whom I profoundly respect and whose technique I greatly admire, only on occasion dragged me into his dream worlds and beyond the verve and talent of his performers.

So, what Dulcinea Langfelder (what a great name!) traverses when she closes her eyes may not be what I survive. And, somewhere, all theatre artists must speak to as much of their assembled audience as possible. Even if I'm enraptured, if 40 per cent of the house is bored to tears, I feel that, and am eased away from, and out of my rapture. Poets, mad people, dancers and actors can dream what they want, but when they walk on stage, they have to be sure they let us in.

In *Victoria*, as the wheelchair-confined character is sliding through her dreamscape she is trying to reconstruct her memory through the haze of Alzheimer's disease. The production then posits memory as a fluid thing, touched



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VICTORIA TANGOS WITH TIME LINES

by our present perspective (like dreams). In essence, we remember what we need to remember and how we need to remember it. (Arthur Kopit's play about a stroke victim, *Wings*, springs immediately to mind.)

It is clear, from this approach, that where Langfelder could touch everyone in her audience directly is at the psychic juncture of two primordial fears: aging and losing control. And that, finally, is what she does – and what she does very, very well.

In a series of small monologues, interactions with an orderly (played and danced brilliantly by Réal Bossé), dances and tangos done with shadows and projections, Langfelder lures us into this little world where nothing is quite right and yet where sense has to be made of it.

It would be quite impossible to go on without making mention of the pivotal contribution of Ana Cappelluto's set and lighting, Yves Labelle's shadowy videos and Jimmy Lakatos, who staged the

videos. I haven't seen a fusion of performer and artifice so clean, so magical, well...ever. It was completely organic and you didn't have the time to decipher how they did it because the total effect was, again, to pull you into the world and scratch at your own phobias.

Oh! Christ, yes, if I had my druthers I would have cut half the text and made the old woman less adorable. But what wasn't working 100 per cent for me was for others in the house and it is through them and with them that I was drawn in again and again. What we had here was damn near perfect theatrical communion and that transcends little mistakes. Beyond that, suffice it to say that it is impossible to describe this experience without stripping it of its surprise. Quite simply, go and see for yourself. (-)

VICTORIA
DULCINEA LANGFELDER
AT CENTAUR TO JUNE 4, 288-3161