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Cirque de Vol Leaves the Audience Bewildered

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Typically during the ten minutes before a show starts, I look through the playbill to get a sense of what I'm about to experience. By the time I arrived for the final performance of [Cirque de Vol Studio's](#) *The Fringe Dwellers*, part of [Burning Coal Theatre Company's](#) [Wait Til You See This](#) second stage series, they had run out of playbills. That was fine, but I will say that I was not really prepared for what I was about to see.

I was immediately surprised when I entered the small black box theater, an almost pitch black room. A few performers, dressed in all black, were on the same level as the audience, slowly moving in what seemed like random patterns across the floor. A few distorted, close-up pictures were projected onto the back wall, as well as onto three round carpets. It reminded me of *Waiting for Godot*, that bleak, minimalistic, not particularly happy but not exactly sad setting. Suspended above the stage was a U-shaped crane-looking rig. I knew this was going to be a unique experience.

The first real "scene" featured a performer who had *avant garde* cat-like makeup on her face. Pale, with dark and extended eyes, she wore an all-black ensemble that featured a hood as well as a gold glittery pair of ears. Hornlike, the ears were the only hint of lightness in the scene. The cat creature crawled slowly to the middle of the floor as the U-shaped rig descended, caressing it gently as it was lowered to her. She took the two carabiners that hung beside her, fastened them to her waist, and just like that, she was off. She started dancing around the room, one foot dragging behind her. Then, she darted towards the audience as she was pulled up to soar high up over our heads.

Projected behind her was what looked to be a spinning armillary sphere. As though she were mimicking the sphere, the performer began to do flips in the air. First going quite slowly, she gradually went faster and faster as the carabiners that suspended her clicked and clicked, threatening to release her with every flip. A man in a frilly pink dress quickly ran out to clasp hands and dance with the catlike creature. The narrator stood and told us that this man was meant to represent the masculine and the feminine, and that this play between them was something that happened within ourselves.

The rest of the performance followed suit as the performers continued to astound and amaze me: a young woman in white and a young man in black performed incredible acrobatics, two children implemented beautiful aerial silk techniques, and other young men and women did some incredible interpretive dance. The show defied gravity, pushed the audience to experience with multiple senses, and dared each viewer to interpret the scene through his or her own eyes.

Many scenes did not have any dialogue, and some didn't have any aural components at all. However, there was one scene in which an actor, Adam, "married himself;" this featured a good bit of dialogue. Much like in a traditional

wedding ceremony, Adam said his vows to his partner (himself). The vow itself was fairly long, but one sentence that pinged in my head was, "I am the universe experiencing itself through Adam."

Upon leaving the theater, I had to stop and ask myself at least once if what I saw had actually happened or if I had just imagined it all. During the drive home, I found myself going back to that line in Adam's vow, thinking about how interesting it is, how it encourages us to face the "big picture" and also to be respectful of those around us. The line is still turning around in my brain today.

My only complaint about *The Fringe Dwellers* is that there are no more performances of this incredibly unique show lined up. Cirque de Vol does perform in other venues and can be booked for events. The company proclaims, "Anything you think you cannot do is simply something you have not done yet." I wonder what they will do next.

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