

# Are dreams just reality with dry ice fog?

Any Night brings terrifying nightmare to life on the stage

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"We live our lives forward, but we only understand them backward," says one of the characters, scrounging from the philosopher Kierkegaard in *Any Night*, a slick little thriller from (and starring) Daniel Arnold and Medina Hahn.

Was Kierkegaard talking about psychological thrillers as well? Puzzles of the thriller species get their juice from doubt: what you don't quite know, what questions are un- or semi-answered, what is withheld, but just till later, till you rewind. Leave exotic horrors for sci-fi. *Psycho*-horror, domesticated, is the creepier horror of the familiar-gone-strange.

*Any Night* is hip to that. "You're living the dream!" says Patrick (Arnold), Anna's cheerful, helpful, considerate upstairs neighbour, in reference to her dance and choreography career. There it is: the crux of her problem. Anna (Hahn), who's just moved into the basement suite on the lam from an ex, has a history of nightmares and night terrors. She sleepwalks. She lives — and

## THEATRE REVIEW

### Any Night

**Theatre:** DualMinds at Fringe Theatre Adventure

**Created by and starring:** Daniel Arnold and Medina Hahn

**Directed by:** Ron Jenkins

**Where:** Westbury Theatre, TransAlta Arts Barns

**Running:** Through Oct. 31

**Tickets:** 780-409-1910 or fringetheatre.ca

dances — in a state of disconcerting uncertainty on the fine line between sleeping and waking, between the sub-basement of consciousness and its upstairs, between bad dream and reality. Are dreams just reality with dry ice fog?

In her new digs, as a tentative romance starts to happen with Patrick, things seem to be getting scarier. Is real life intruding on her dreams? Is it vice versa? Trust, like belief, lives or dies beyond tangible evidence, after all.

Arnold and Hahn are the same pair of actor/playwrights who brought us *Tuesdays & Sundays*. What they've fashioned here is a tense and creepy,

thoroughly marketable little two-hander, with only a few lurches into the crudely obvious. I mustn't reveal details about the story, except to offer the caveat that a lip-synching scene is something that should be undertaken, even for comic relief, only with Extreme Caution. Or not at all. Ditto anything to do with psychics.

The pair has a lively chemistry on-stage, Hahn as the brittle and vulnerable dancing insomniac/slumberer, whose tastes in music run to numbers called *Torture*, and Arnold as everyone else who populates Anna's world, including the innocuous Patrick. What really makes *Any Night* work as a sort of hallucination is the expert stagecraft of director Ron Jenkins. He is ingenious about making every aspect of the tricky business of a two-actor thriller seem theatrically inspired and atmospheric — a moving staircase, the spatial relationship between characters, everything about the stage pictures in which the production unfolds. Spectacular participants in this are Peter Pokorny's set, David Fraser's textural and shivery lighting, Gordon Heal's unnerving sound design.

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SUPPLIED: STEPHANIE HULL

Medina Hahn and Daniel Arnold perform in *Any Night*.