

# A SHOCKING THEATRICAL TREAT

a review by  
Simon Brody

It does my heart good to be able to give a well-deserved positive review to local theater productions, and Green Candle's "Shock Candy" has given me another such opportunity. As the name implies, and the season suggests, shocks do abound in this Halloween-y evening of horrific monologues.

Not that the monologues are horrific in quality, but more in nature. Woven together as a collection of segments that are part dramatic reading and part campfire ghost story, the pieces are jazzed up with eye-catching and engaging sets, costume designs and special effects, as well as a few loud screams and gunshots that conveniently occur in the darkened scenes, causing more than a few return screams from the audience.

Russell Dreher, the show's director, culled the play's material from his own collection of horror novels and short stories. With his interest in the horror genre, and experience setting up haunted houses and thrill nights since the seventh grade, Dreher definitely has the proper credentials for the job. One of the foremost beauties of this production is the selection of work. Mostly atypical horror stories, some are inflected with humor while others deal with more risqué themes, such as John J. Ordover's "All Flesh is Clay" and "Head Turner" by Kevin Andrew Murphy and Thomas S. Roche, both short stories from an anthology called "Splatter Punks." More traditional horror is represented by the reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."

Tracey Lynn Gidrich begins the evening with "Having a Woman at Lunch," a humorous and scary story that draws parallels between business-world politics and cannibalism in, perhaps, an overly literal manner. I have been impressed with Gidrich's acting before in

plays I've liked much less than this one, and it was good to see her performing material deserving of her talent. The story is particularly complemented by her cold, wry delivery, and the candle-lit table-for-one creates an intimate bond between Gidrich and the audience.

were explicitly described, every detail of the reconstruction of the dead elaborated in a morbidly dramatic style. Bachman's performance was dynamic, at times frothing before turning tender; his particular skills and styles seemed quite appropriate to the ghoulish

this evening he gave a performance that escalated my opinion of him.

Next was "Head Turner," dispensed by Sue Ball in a lustful, energetic manner. The story details the experience of Trona, a down-and-out, overly-masculine drag queen who is at once taken and

Next was "Born of Man and Woman," by far the evening's spookiest piece, and my favorite. Delivered entirely in the dark, actress Bobbi Pritt's shrill, echoey voice came piped in over loudspeakers. In broken, idiot English, the voice tells about the character's life chained to the wall of her abusive parents' basement. The voice tells in diary-entry confidentiality about watching the "little Mommies and Daddies out the window," and mostly about being "hurt." Pritt's exceptionally eerie tone and the story's bizarre construction are made for each other, while the lights-out effect and the disturbing nature of the material completed what was the night's scariest piece.

John Alexander made sure the acting quality stayed high to the very end, serving up a particularly manic reading of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Dressed in a slightly disheveled period costume and a crazed look, he gave life to the antiquated piece. Properly recounting the haunting sound of the disembodied organ from beneath the floorboards, Alexander had quite convinced the audience of his madness by the end of the act, a great selection for a closing piece.

Along with the talented actors, Dreher deserves at least equal credit for the success of "Shock Candy," an evening composed of stories that rely on more traditional horror, flawlessly interwoven with those that explore darker, riskier territory. For incorporating shadier elements, and being a little bit more "out there" in pieces like "Born of Man and Woman," I give this collection of works an exceptional recommendation as art that takes chances and succeeds. As Dreher himself says, "If you never take the risk, you never hit it." **V**



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The actual story of "Having a Woman at Lunch" was at times difficult to follow — the story shifted between four or five characters who were easily confused — but this was a slight defect saved by the pieces' generally humorous tone and Gidrich's performance.

Off to a good start already, Erik Bachman, another highly talented local actor masked in pasty white makeup and blacked-out eyes, attacked "All Flesh is Clay." Dressed in appropriately frightful trappings, he began to discuss his "work." Frankenstein-ian tasks

nature of the piece.

Ryan Ober followed with one of the evening's high points, "A Woman Seldom Found," a romantic tale with slight horrific turns which was masterfully treated by his soft voice. Recounting a young man's affair with a strange and beautiful woman in Rome, Ober's voice was so soothing at times that I almost ignored the story. Luckily, the pace of the tale was slow and relaxed and I didn't get lost before the inevitable twist at its conclusion. I quite enjoyed Ober in this summer's "God's Funeral," and

jealous of the post-op beauty of Bobby the Filipino stripper. While I enjoyed the first half of the story, when it made fantastical turns to the more horror-based side I lost interest. The material turns fairly banal, complete with rock interlude taking itself into the faux-Anne Rice, pulp-depths by the end of the act. To her credit, Ball gives a great performance and treats all the material expertly. My issue is more with the writing, and I would have been far more excited about this portion of the evening if it had ended earlier.