



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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ONCE UPON A MIDNIGHT

Festival Centre's OzAsia Festival

The Space

Until 25 Sept 2008

Review by Richard Flynn

Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Raven" begins:

"Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door".

This "Once Upon a Midnight" is about much more than someone tapping at a door. Here it is a gateway from Earth to a weird parallel world of werewolves, vampires, vultures, tengu, ningyo, and a nasty Blue Fairy. They accompany Earth's 14-year old Kelsey Clarke, "the most paranoid child in the entire world" (Lauren Henderson), her 16-year old brother Ryan (Matthew Crook) and Leiko, a baby (Keiichi Yonamine) on an unwitting journey of fantasy, horror and adventure. Just right for the kids at bedtime, but some parents might prefer a tot or three from the whisky cupboard!

While there are elements of "The Rocky Horror Show" in this new work, "Once Upon a Midnight" is otherwise quite original - a high energy, bilingual rock musical conceived in Adelaide (book by Alex Vickery-Howe with music - nine numbers by Tim Lucas), workshopped and rehearsed largely in Japan's Okinawa City (by its Adelaide director, Catherine Fitzgerald) and performed over a power-packed 90 minutes, in English and Japanese, by Australian students from Flinders University Drama Centre and Japanese actors from Japan's Kijimuna Festival. In all, a cast of 13 (lucky number?) with two young musicians (keyboard/guitar and percussion). And they have no need of surtitles! All is clear enough, and very clever!

Although special mention is made here of Nozemi, the Ningyo (Mai Kakimoto), Kelsey (Lauren Henderson) and Scratch, the Werewolf (Chris Asimos in an exhausting, frenetic performance), all fifteen performers shine in a show that is well lit, visually striking and has a simple, but very versatile set.

Will Kelsey Clarke conquer the night, her seemingly boundless fears of germs, her big brother, traffic, and all the people in the world who are not 'like her'? She and her friends certainly conquered one Adelaide Opening Night audience.

It would be hard to find a better example of cross-cultural cooperation, so much the point of the Festival Centre's annual OzAsia Festival than "Once Upon a Midnight". It would be even harder to find a show of its type as entertaining.