

Dark and Stormy Night

Despite a few bumps, I Might Be Edgar Allan Poe is perfect for the spooky season

The days are growing shorter, leaves fall from the trees and swirl at our feet, and the evening air is cool and crisp. Yes, it's autumn, and I can't think of a better way to spend a fall evening than venturing out into the cold and attending a live performance, especially one that embraces the season's dark and spooky flavour. If you can overlook a few faults, Giggling Iguana's current production of *I Might Be Edgar Allan Poe* is the (almost) perfect play for such a night.

Joseph (David Radford) has ended up in a mental institution for mysterious reasons involving a fire. While there, he discovers a poem by Edgar Allan Poe and quickly becomes obsessed with Poe's stories. This leads Joseph to the realization that he might indeed be Poe reincarnated.

I Might Be was originally a one-man Fringe play written by Dawson Nichols. But in this multi-character adaptation, Joseph is treated by the rather useless psychiatrist Dr. Fuco (Christina Patterson), and has occasionally humorous—yet totally unrelated—conversations with random patients played by Tim Sutherland and Michael Delamont. These characters, while amusing, do little more than provide some unnecessary comic relief, distracting from the real heart of the show: Joseph's exploration of Poe's work and his own tormented past.

Radford shines in this role, creating a character that is both intriguing and evocative. He tells his story to the voices in his head (the audience), leading them through his time at the institution, his past and his obsession with Poe. You can feel the power Poe's words has over Joseph every time Radford picks up a volume of the writer's work and begins to read. These moments truly are the best parts of the play. Radford's reading of *The Raven* and *The Tell-Tale Heart* are both captivating and chilling. Cut the other superfluous characters and add a few more poems or stories and you'd have a strong, cohesive and engaging play.

Which makes me wonder why directors Tim Sutherland and Ian Case adapted Nichol's work from a one-man work into several-character piece. Surely, it must have been to accommodate the fifth (and most obviously out-of-place) character, Craigdarroch Castle. Don't get me wrong—this is a lovely building and a fun venue, when appropriate. In last year's production of *The War of the Worlds*, for instance, it made sense to move from room to room, watching the scenes unfold in different locations. The audience actually became part of the action, especially during the final invasion at the end. However, the concept just doesn't work this time around. The audience traipses about, up and down stairs, only to watch a scene that could have easily taken place in the room before. In an attempt to try to justify the new location, they needed other characters to set the scenes. The forced movement about the castle made the other characters necessary, and vice versa, when both could have easily been done without.

I Might Be Edgar Allan Poe
 Until October 31
 Craigdarroch Castle, 1040 Joan
 Tickets \$16-\$18 • 592-5323

Then again, a tour of Craigdarroch Castle coupled with some amazing readings of Poe's best pieces is a pretty good combination. Ignore the few unnecessary distractions, and you've got a perfect way to spend a fall evening.

—Sarah Gignac