



Chicago Stage Review

Reviews and Features of Chicago Theater
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L'Imbecile – REVIEW

By Venus Zarris

“Beware this gypsy. She flirts with lunacy!”

Babes with Blades is no stranger to theatrical risk taking. As a matter of fact, their mission statement (“Babes With Blades Theatre Company uses stage combat to place women and their stories center stage...”) is itself a unique and provocative endeavor.

In their current production of *L'Imbecile*, the Babes deliver deliciously decadent delusions of deviant debauchery and diabolical dilemmas. This fantastical production is as maniacally wild as it is marvelously intoxicating.

Playwright Aaron Adair brilliantly appropriates Verdi's *Rigoletto*, subtracting the music and replacing it with madness. Director Wm Bullion amazingly animates Adair's intricate hallucination with stylized vision and an unwavering ensemble. Each character completely inhabits their unreality as they convince us of this courtly tale of sex, betrayal and revenge. Bullion's uses of percussive syncopation and Kabuki theatrics create a mesmerizing theatrical spectacle.

The staggeringly delightful cast is comprised of vixens, female and male, most enticing. Maureen Yasko is a wickedly wonderful and completely commanding queen. Amy E. Harmon is both haunting and hysterical in a tour de force performance as Priestess and Gypsy. Kathrynne Wolf grounds this otherworldly phantasm with breathtaking emotional authenticity in the midst of a stylized asylum of chaos.

Babes With Blades go BIG and go BOLD in *L'Imbecile* and the payoff for their audience is incredible. Do NOT miss this outrageous theatrical triumph!

4 STARS

L'Imbecile runs through May 10 at Rivendell Theatre, 5775 N. Ridge Ave.

L'Imbecile images by Steven Townshend and Johnny Knight.

Box Office: 773-904-0391