

# Theatre review: The Lover, Royal Lyceum \*\*\*\*



*'One day, I was already old...very early in my life it was too late...It was already too late when I was sixteen.'*

Directors Fleur Darkin/Jemima Levick, combine disembodied monologue, conversation dance and physical movement with surreal, teasingly elegiac affection in this haunting, *Lolita* like Mekong doomed Delta Lady adaptation of Marguerite Duras' eponymous autobiographical novel

He, *The Man*, Yosuke Kusano, is an attractive, fey Chinese playboy in 1930s Vietnam. She, *The Girl* is of a poor white Parisian aspirational family played with flaxen haired and sinew lithe, dangerous compulsion by Amy Hollinshead. She lies to convince him she is just sixteen years old.

Susan Vidler is both her older self as narrator and *The Mother* once. Hers is an enigmatic, compulsive lament to revisit her younger days. *The Girl* glories in a rebellious glut of teenage girl sexual kicks all through the monsoon bed soaked nights. Both besotted by her power and bewitching desire, *The Man* becomes a displacement, saccharine daddy superficially sufficient to satisfy her Electra complex indulgences. We learn that unless memories are spoken of truthfully, other voices can possess them.

The sensually erotic love making sequences are sculpted in slow motion liquid ivory, soaked in lighting designer, Emma Jones', shimmering shadows. Torben Lars Sylvest exploits his sound design pallet with insinuating guile. The ever consuming 'incantation' of the Mekong river's presence haunts this production with ravishing lyrical obsession.

Colonial conceit, rabid racial division and cultural taboo seems as speciously relevant now as ever was.