

Edinburgh International Festival 2018 REVIEW- La Maladie de mort ***

La Maladie de la mort, directed by Katie Mitchell, is a sinister and deeply intense new production of Marguerite Duras's original novella. A man (Nick Fletcher) hires a woman (Laetitia Dosch) to visit him at night as he tries to understand what love is and how it may come about.



Photo Stephen Cumiskey

Through their interactions on a live film screen, we see that the performance is an exploration of how the male gaze disempowers women. Man's control of how women are viewed, results in the objectification of women as they are made subject to the oppressive male gaze.

In principle this deconstruction should provoke thought about how the gaze is formed in the first instance and lead to thought about the impact that the gaze has on women.

To some extent, this production does go some way to breaking

this down. The set is eerily quiet, what can be seen at times is the flash of a camera as the man analyses her body through his phone. While she sleeps, this gaze is most evident as he suddenly feels most at power when she has least power.

We are allowed to investigate her back story and discover how her ideas about men are formed, but are denied access to his. He merely represents a whole gender in his namelessness and identity-less characterisation. The effect of this is to generalise all men into one labelled mass and prevents any thought about the aspects of male socialisation which promote the gaze.

The performance is provocative and almost unnervingly voyeuristic. It is easy to quickly become desensitised to the message as the play slowly creeps on.

Ultimately, we are left with the image of a man in the full throes of la maladie and a sense that there can be no real conclusion to the story.