

Tales of the Grotesque

Cincinnati KIK FM Radio; Rick Pender

I've been complaining for years that theatre for young adults needs some serious attention in the Tri-State.

Cincinnati Children's Theater don't bother to program for this difficult audience any more, and none of the smaller youth touring organizations, their obsession with Shakespeare notwithstanding, seem to understand that if you want to hold the attention of teenage audiences you've got to be at least as cool as they are.

Enter this year's spring tour from the Playhouse: billed as a chiller-thriller Poe experience, it better not disappoint the Blair Witch generation.

Artistic Director Ed Sterne wisely hired director Gyllian Raby (Sabina's Splendid Brain, Ensemble Theatre) whose stylish staging and musical savvy are a good fit for Thomas' clever adaptation. where the more mysterious details of Edgar Allen Poe's life are explored from the nightmarish perspective of his best loved tales.

Stunning video imagery by Dave Overbeck projects on to moving hospital screens, enabling this small company to deliver Poe's most evocative images while moving acrobatically through set and costume changes necessary for a series of altering realities to unravel .

Eric Melver is haunting as the restless Poe who doubts his sanity, ably supported by Danielle Taminga whose Ligeia brings a dimension and intelligence absent from most females of gothic romance.

Mitchiko Kitiyama's set is at once flexible and claustrophobic, and the famous bricking-up of the wall from The Cask of Amontillado sends shivers up your spine.