

British Theatre Guide

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The Duchess of Malfi

John Webster

UCLU Runaground

C nova

30 July–16 August 2014



Some would argue that this is the ultimate revenge tragedy; the body count is certainly high enough to include it in the running and the grim ways in which the bodies are dispatched makes for uncomfortable viewing however it is staged.

This company uses its small playing area wisely and the production benefits from a slight feeling of claustrophobia.

The scenes in which the Duchess is imprisoned are the best directed as the tension gradually grows whilst her treatment diminishes. The death scenes are enacted with thought and the strangulation is particularly vivid.

The decision to play the asylum patients as off-stage noises also avoids the possibility of humour as sometimes the absurdity of the scene can give way to nervous laughter from the audience.

The cast are sincere in their performances and there are moments that are really engaging. However many of the more lyrical speeches are rushed and at points almost incomprehensible.

This is a good introduction to this notoriously tricky play but is patchy in its delivery.

Reviewer: [Amy Yorston](#)