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# Dispatches from the Fringe: 'Grounded' soars to stunning heights

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*Photo used with kind permission of Patrick Redmond*

## Grounded by George Brant

Rating: ★★★★★

She's a Wyoming girl who once flew an F-16 named Tiger. A lone wolf tearing through her perfect blue proudly wearing the suit she earned through sweat and brains. Then she got pregnant and the world changed, executing a personality strike she's struggling to come to grips with. In the exhilarating and thought provoking "Grounded" by American playwright George Brant, one woman's journey from Air Force to Chair Force asks hard questions about the moral, personal and political implications of a world where drone gods can be judge, jury and executioner of those deemed the guilty grey, and where the white knuckle experience no longer arises from the flying but from the killing.

Produced by Siren Productions and receiving its Irish premiere as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe, "Grounded" follows an unnamed female fighter pilot who feels like she's gone from playing with

AC/DC to joining the Alan Parsons Project. Or worse, becoming one of Neil Diamond's backing singers. For a start, they stopped making F-16's and started making drones. Wars no longer take her away for months on end. Instead they're danger free, twelve hour shifts in front of a grey, computer screen after which she goes home and struggles to embrace the corn and cheese lifestyle she would kill or die to defend. She can't decompress, can't separate herself from her suit. As the obsessive drone god relentlessly pursues a false prophet across the desert boundaries begin to dissolve. The desert she flies her drone over could be the desert she drives through to work each day. The car she follows from her eye in the sky could be her car. The young girl on her screen could be her daughter. They could be us and we could be them and the drone god can kill all in little over a second.

With a stack of chairs, four high, placed at one end of a simply constructed traverse, with three stacks placed at its opposite end, Joe Vaněk's set design was a master stroke in ingenuity. Throughout, the stage was constantly transformed as chairs were rearranged to create a wide array of locations, all of which was ably supported by Davy Cunningham's subtle and clever lighting design. Director Selina Cartmell left no detail unattended and brought Brant's excellent script vividly to life. As did the captivating and compelling performance of Clare Dunne who was mesmerizing as the tomboy pilot come wife, mother and drone god struggling to make sense of herself and the new world rising.

Thoughtful, compelling and utterly engaging "Grounded" is an exhilarating tour de force. Siren Productions have once again delivered, and in Clare Dunne's remarkable portrayal might well have delivered what is possibly the standout performance of the festival. A must see.

"Grounded" written by George Brant and produced by Siren Productions runs at the Project Arts Centre as part of the Tiger Dublin Fringe till September 12th.

Tickets: €22/€20

For times and further information go to [Project Arts Centre](#) or [Tiger Dublin Fringe](#)



**Chris O'Rourke**

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