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Dublin Theatre Festival 2013 - Song, Shakespeare and O'Sullivan simply superb

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Camille O'Sullivan in the Royal Shakespeare Companies ,The Rape of Lucrece
Dublin Theatre Festival

The Rape of Lucrece by The Royal Shakespeare Company

Rating: ★★★★★

A stage dark for tragedy, laden with sheaves of paper piled high and a large, black piano. Text and music are duly represented. The text is William Shakespeare's epic poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*. The music is a series of original compositions by Fergal Murray and Camille O'Sullivan. Produced by the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) and directed by Elizabeth Freestone, *The Rape of Lucrece* is a powerful, poignant and passionate production offering a fresh approach to Shakespeare with a breathtaking performance that is a sheer joy to behold.

The Rape of Lucrece tells of a virtuous woman Lucrece, faithful to her husband, the Roman officer, Collatine. Raped by the king's son Tarquin when her husband is away Lucrece, having lost something more important than life, takes her own life to spare herself and her husband dishonor and shame. In doing so she brings punishment reigning down on Tarquin and on Rome itself. As is

always the case with Shakespeare, language opens up layer upon layer of richness and depth, which Freestone mines to the fullest and O'Sullivan performs with a passion. Here the role of women as a form of currency between men is clearly, but subtly, foregrounded, elevating the poem above a simple story of love and honor without ever losing sight of the human tragedy unfolding.

If O'Sullivan was something of a homecoming queen playing to a home crowd, she did not disappoint. Indeed, O'Sullivan was a revelation. Shifting seamlessly between narrator and characters, her voice was marvelously nuanced and textured whether speaking or singing. Singing is O'Sullivan's preferred forte and lines revealed hidden riches when subjected to her musical prowess. Delivery of both text and song were perfectly complimented by a lexicon of articulate hand gestures, like supporting narrators enriching the telling, with not a movement seeming wasted. Accompanied by Fergal Murray on piano, the two crafted a wonderful interplay between music and text, marrying Shakespeare's lines with an array of musical styles, all enveloped in that unspoken empathy that exists between two artists operating with complete understanding.

At times *The Rape of Lucrece* does totter on the brink of becoming a Shakespearian musical, or musical revue, but it always manages to pull itself back just in time. O'Sullivan too, on occasion, seemed to yield a little to the overpowering of emotion, almost slipping into melodrama, but this too was reigned in before it went to far. But these were risks well worth taking, ensuring that both the production and performance were always playing right up to the edge.

Five years in development, *The Rape of Lucrece*, brainchild of director Elizabeth Freestone, was well worth the wait. Her chance encounter in Edinburgh with O'Sullivan and Murray seems to have been favored by the Gods, for their collaborative energies and resulting production is a daring and wonderful reshaping of Shakespeare in a contemporary form. Freestone's direction is top class, Murray's musical instincts are first rate, but the night belonged to O'Sullivan. This charming, and often self-effacing, actress and singer displayed astonishing range in what was a compelling, riveting, tour de force performance.

Yes, it's Shakespeare and there may be singing. But thank God for that. Simply not to be missed.

The Rape of Lucrece runs at O'Reilly Hall, Belvedere until October 12th. Doors open 7.30 p.m.
Tickets are €30.00

For further information, please click on the following link:

https://dublintheatrefestival.com/Online/The_Rape_Of_Lucrece



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