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# Yield to the 'Temptress'

**November 2, 2015**

7:10 PM MST



Paul Kealyn and Matthew O'Brien in *Temptress*  
*Jennifer Magee*

## Temptress by Philip St. John

Rating: ★★★★★

As a modern day ghost story, Philip St. John's latest play, "Temptress," won't leave you quaking in your boots. Light on scares, with just the occasional flicker of otherworldly ghostliness, it's tale of spectrophiliac Noel, and his earthy, Rolo eating rival Pete, doesn't conjure up much by way of the supernatural. What it does conjure up is a thoroughly enjoyable, laugh out loud, wickedly insightful depiction of male insecurity and vanity. Deftly directed, exquisitely written, with two crowning performances, "Temptress" exposes the fears and foibles at the heart of the masculine in this lovely little gem of a production.

Set in a decrepit room in a large, old house in Wicklow, "Temptress" follows Noel, besotted by an invisible seductress, whose cry for rescue one night brings the down to earth Pete to his door. A battery of banality, Pete attempts to relieve Noel of his instruments of departure and of his belief in his bliss bestowing succubus. Matters take a curious turn during the night and in what follows male

vanity and insecurity are writ large. Inside their crumbling edifice of masculinity their problem, of course, is women. Real women, less desirable than the imagined, are likely to betray you, abandon you, be more successful than you. Imagined women, who appear naked offering unbridled passion, are equally as dangerous, sexual sirens seducing you to death. Male dreams of exaggerated sexual prowess, how many women and how many times, conceal the male nightmare of sexual inadequacy, fear of commitment and of responsibility. But something, or someone, has to give, and when the real is unreal then the unreal might just be real enough to die for.

With impeccable attention to detail, Lisa Krugel's exquisite set design captures beautifully the faded glory and decrepitude that informs the life of St. John's cleverly crafted characters as well as "Temptress" ghostly atmosphere. Paul Doran's light design, built around an apology of a light bulb, wonderfully encapsulates both the haunted and hilarious. Composer Carl Kennedy's sound design successfully adds a hint of eeriness in places, but its songs between transitions seem a little out of place. Under director Matthew Ralli's expert eye pace never slackens and the rich humour in St. John's excellent script is given full expression. All of which is given perfect expression by two excellent performances by Matthew O'Brien as the highly strung Noel, and Paul Kealyn as the man mountain Pete, two men haunted as much by themselves and each other as by their perfect woman, whose sole attraction lies in her ability to deliver sexual gratification.

Positioned as a ghost story "Temptress" does enough to keep the supernatural interest engaged, but not enough to be truly ghostly. Positioned as a comedy "Temptress" is right on the money. Utterly enjoyable and unrelentingly hilarious, "Temptress" is a wonderfully seductive production. The only way to resist is to yield to it.

"Temptress" by Philip St. John, produced by Speckintime and High Seas Productions, runs at The New Theatre until November 7.

Show begins: 7.30 p.m.

Tickets: €15/€12

For further information visit [The New Theatre](#)



**Chris O'Rourke**

Theatre Examiner

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