

Growing Up Can Be Scary With Concord Floral by Jordan Tamanelli

Even though it's Christmastime this production gave me the creeps like it was Halloween again.

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It's funny that the Colorado State University Center for the Arts calls this a film because this had a lot of the hallmarks of digital shows that we've seen over this year. We do applaud their attempt to add some multimedia elements in the production too. In a way, Saffron Henke's direction reminded us a lot of what Gorilla Rep's Macbeth was doing in the beginning. However, over its exceptionally long runtime (over 90 minutes is a lot to ask of a digital theatre audience) there seemed to be a lot more digital trickery involved to make everyone look like they're in the same room. I'll say the same thing that I've said before in other productions: sometimes just using the Zoom or Streamyard windows frees up performers to perform, the director to direct, and the audience to receive a powerful performance.



Concord Floral's parallel narrative style is one that I've always attached to. Okay, I'm using my five-dollar words (bad Ricky!). What I mean is that all of the characters are storytellers and they narrate what they're doing as they do it. It's always great to use it to convey a heightened spooky mood as this horror story does. Jordan Tamanelli makes this style work and I could dig into the story. It can be done wrong with too much exposition but this one picked the right balance.

This group of actors made my night! They bit into each of their roles and refused to let go. Imagine that you're already having to adjust to a new school year and a new format for the department AND then you have to reinvent the wheel and do a show. I made it through a theatre program during the H1N1 pandemic and I remember now that it barely disrupted our lives except that a few actors got sick during our show but the show still went on. This is far scarier and it has disrupted everything for these actors and they still they seemed to have thrown themselves into the new style with gusto and made it their own.



Speaking of reinventing the wheel, I can't imagine the pressure on schools right now to innovate and try to give their students just as much enrichment and opportunities as they would have had with in-person lessons. The head of the Colorado University theatre department alluded to this fact when she said that they had to become a film department overnight. However, with all the growth that digital theatre has seen in its infancy, a lot of the best advancements have been in conventions of acting and directing which this program excelled at.

I'd argue that simplicity, not multimedia green screen tricks and techno voodoo make a great show. Too much flash can drown out the text of the play and leave the audience guessing. This is not the first time that I have said that I just wished for Zoom windows, probably won't be the last. I would rather sacrifice some production value to feel a connection with the performers and let them "break the fifth wall" as we say than to feel like I was watching a blockbuster movie. All it takes is this already amazing production team to trust their awesome students and the text of the play to create a wonderful piece of digital theatre.



The ultimate goal of a scary story is to give us some spine chilling moments to take home with us at the end of the night. This story and the actors' interpretation are still giving me the willies. I'm also taking home the amazing cast and some of the amazing imagery. Most of it I still have no clue how they did it. I'm also taking home the dedication of this faculty and their hard work to make this show work. Theatre is alive right now because of all these artists' hard work.

Learn more about the program [here](#).