

James ghost story absorbing

THEATRE REVIEW
by **SALLY BROOKER**

▶ **Turn of the Screw**
▶ **By Henry James**
▶ **Oamaru Opera House,**
Friday, November 18.
▶ **Adapted by Jeffrey**
Hatcher, directed by Michael
Adams, presented by NO
Productions Theatre.

A large audience filled the Oamaru Opera House InkBox theatre last Friday for the first of two performances of Henry James' classic Victorian ghost story, *Turn of the Screw*.

This interpretation by the Christchurch-based NO Productions Theatre was brought to town for the Oamaru Victorian Heritage Celebrations.

With only two actors and a stage empty except for a chair and shallow flight of steps, much of the play took place in the audience's imagination.

That was fitting, given James' intangible, perturbing tale where reality is questioned and questionable.

The acting of Nataliya Oryshchuk and David Allen was sublime. Every nuance of their voices, every flicker of their facial muscles was harnessed. Their movements were sparse and therefore significant. Their command of the demanding script was exquisite.

Allen took on multiple roles, from wealthy man-about-town

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to elderly housekeeper to 10-year-old boy. He slid so smoothly between them and was so completely in character as each there was no confusion for the audience.

As the main character, the governess, Oryshchuk was utterly bewitching.

With the assistance of exceptionally good lighting design by director Michael Adams, she fleshed out the entire play so the audience had no sense of deprivation. It could "see" the gothic mansion, the lake, the children's faces.

The experience was so absorbing there was complete silence and stillness in the auditorium throughout as we drank in the performances. We left thankful we'd done so. I was still thinking about them three days later.

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