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## Two Faced Bastard: Gripping and unique, not gimmicky

Article

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**Michael Crabb**  
Special to the Star

### Two Faced Bastard

★★★★(out of 4)

Directed and choreography by Gideon Obarzanek and Lucy Guerin.

Until June 13 at the Joey & Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre, 227 Front Street East, Toronto.  
416-870-8000 or [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca)



Australian dance-theatre troupe Chunky Move performs in Luminato-presented *Two Faced Bastard*.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

If you've ever read a review of a show you saw and despairingly wondered if the critic was at a different performance, you could be right; certainly if the show in question is Australian dance-theatre troupe Chunky Move's Luminato-presented *Two Faced Bastard*.

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As you enter the auditorium you have to choose between two discrete seating areas, each placed on opposing sides of a large stage bisected by a tall vertical blind that for most of the hour-long show remains closed.

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Although *Two Faced Bastard* appears to have a unified theme, what each section of the audience witnesses is essentially different. Occasional sounds emanating from the obscured side or glimpses afforded when the performers break through the blind offer tantalizing hints of what you may be missing. It's simultaneously

frustrating and gripping and the concept, gimmicky though it might sound, plays fruitfully into the work's central concern – at least the concern revealed to those of us who took the longest walk to our seats.

For us, a rack of costumes suggested a backstage scene. Six of the seven cast members sat in a row seats with Mike McLeish acting as moderator of a faintly comical panel of performers discussing the nature of performance and what they expect from an audience. Gradually, each peels off to change into costume and pass through to the other side where, it becomes apparent, Stephanie Lake is dancing solo.

Only Brian and Mike – the performers retain their real names throughout – remain to debate the subject at hand, with the self-confessedly disruptive Brian, a compellingly skilful actor, gradually revealing a dark neuroticism that later explodes in a Kafka-channeling scene as he interrogates the hapless but otherwise amiable Mike about his supposed interest in the Stephanie we have yet to see.

The pace quickens as *Two Faced Bastard* gathers steam, moving from apparent rationality to chaos, absurdist clowning in cardboard and Styrofoam costumes and eruptions of sinister violence. The Mike/Stephanie issue does seem to have substance, but on our side we're never quite sure.

Gradually, as the mood intensifies, we realize that this is not just another riff on the long tradition of shows that give us a behind-the-scenes look at the duality of a performer's existence. It's a metaphor that speaks powerfully to the way we enact our own lives and even perhaps, to the very nature of rationality. Mike seems to represent the voice of reason but there's always another, more impulsively irrational side of him – just waiting on the other

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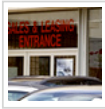


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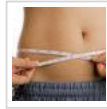
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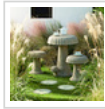
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