

NEW YORK CITY THEATRE REVIEWS

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A Small Hole

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By Michael Lazan

Provocative performances from this ensemble of mostly recent Columbia MFA grads fail to resonate because of Julia Jarcho's overly intellectual and confusing avant-garde script.

Jarcho's concept is to "mutate" Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, deemed the novelist's "problem child" and her "least adapted" work by the company in its program. Jarcho turns the book into an impressionistic political collage, adding bits and pieces from such sources as the Marquis de Sade's novel *Justine*. The idea appears to be to fill in the gaps around Fanny, a dull, awkward, asexual sort who is lost in the chaotic world of the Mansfield estate but somehow persists.

In fact, this Fanny ends up spending much of her time in a box. When out of the box, she shyly engages with the estate's more-spirited inhabitants, including the rather mischievous Crawford siblings, Mary and Henry. The resultant salad of sadomasochism and costume drama contains pretty language and some witty moments but is ultimately frustratingly byzantine.

The company, Performance Lab 115, won an award for overall excellence at the Fringe last year. It's not hard to see why. As finely orchestrated by director Alice Reagan and choreographer Beth Kurkjian, the movements, expressions, and élan exhibited here are gorgeously theatrical and consistently striking. While Elena Mulrone is a bit on the ordinary side as Fanny, the other members of the cast, all in multiple roles, are consistently spot-on, with Rebecca Lingafelter and Walker Lewis especially comfortable. Shelley Gershoni and Jeff Clarke also acquit themselves favorably. The group is complemented by Shane LeClair's simple but very pretty set of mobile red panels.

Presented by Performance Lab 115 as part of the New York International Fringe Festival at Dance New Amsterdam, 280 Broadway, NYC. Aug. 12-24. Remaining performances: Fri., Aug. 18, 11:15 p.m.; Sun., Aug. 20, 9:45 p.m.; Thu., Aug. 24, 6:15 p.m. (212) 279-4488 or www.fringenyc.org.