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Broadway Baby

## Camille



by Oliver Simmonds on 18th August 2016

Most Fringe shows think they can squeeze two hours into fifty minutes. Not *Camille*: it's focused and the pace of it is of a kind gallingly absent from Edinburgh.

Concentrated, caustic theatre and perfect for anyone seeking a  
different pace of show

Musing, *Camille* takes the stage quietly, though don't assume this means she's content. With Ewa Pasikowska on piano and violin, Kamila Klamut's hero sits, ruminates and occasionally moves in a flurry of kinetic modelling. Camille Claudel is our plaintive protagonist, the lover and muse of sculptor Auguste Rodin. Her story is told gradually, using fragments of her real-life letters, although 'story' might not be the appropriate term here. *Camille* simply begets feeling, and what a feeling it is.

Spurned by lovers and family, Camille is consigned to a mental institution, forced to wither out her days with the memories of her modelling and her self-hatred. It's more poem than play, yet this is not to undermine the vivid physical current of the show. *Camille* is a hybrid of the concrete and the conceptual, almost more of a sculpture

than a piece of theatre.

It should be said that the English translation doesn't fare that well. It's either too obvious, as when she dodges ambiguity by telling us explicitly that Camille's brother has put her in an institution, or else uses awkward idioms like "cut to the quick" which are ill-fitting with Klamut's accent.

Nevertheless, the direction (Mariana Sadovska, Carol Brinkmann Ellis, Vivien Wood, Alexandra Kazazou) and lighting (Bartosz Radziszewski) trace the angles of Camille's life with dark grace. There's little light so any sparing use of it makes contours and shapes that lend finely to the sculptured nature of Rodin's work and Camille herself.

By the stagecraft, our hero is as much formed as the clay that populates the stage. There's a particular mesmerizing piece of choreography that has Klamut scramble around a table: this is worth the price of admission alone, crucially giving the show the vital kick to get across the subjection she's facing.

Klamut is sublime and so is the direction. I can't love the script but that's a minor contention. The Fringe, even the formally playful Summerhall, needs more drama like *Camille*. It's concentrated, caustic theatre and perfect for anyone seeking a different pace of show.