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FEST

Camille



THEATRE REVIEW | READ IN ABOUT 2 MINUTES

Camille



By **Andrew Latimer**

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Notable French sculptor Camille Claudel, kidnapped by her older brother Paul and confined in a psychiatric institution in 1913 for the final 30 years of her life, is here remembered by performance artist Kamila Klamut. Her touching, tortured performance verbalises the violent punishment of women for exercising autonomy over their bodies and their artistry.

It is thought that Paul's motivation to have Camille arrested was to incarcerate her for a suspected abortion, which Paul assumed she underwent after her relationship with Auguste Rodin. Klamut sits in almost total darkness from inside her room, a shaft of light illuminating only parts of her face, as she recounts her brutal kidnapping and transfer to the asylum. A large sculpture ominously gazes over Camille throughout, which she occasionally stops to scold as if it were Paul himself.

This often obscure performance is bursting with intellectual rigour. From the way in which Klamut constructs and performs the infantilisation of women in France during the 20th century to the hostile male gaze which frequently objectifies and assaults, Camille is both distressed condemnation and tender soliloquy. Accompanied by classical piano music performed by Ewa Pasikowska, it is careful to guard against any joy we might experience. After all, Camille is also a meditation on how asylums cause insanity, rather than treat the condition.

We are gradually, painfully, dragged into an abyss. What is at times a difficult watch is also an uncompromising interrogation of silenced and obliterated sexual and artistic freedom. Relentless and chilling, to be sure, but utterly compelling.

[This review was first published with the performer listed as Mariana Sadovska, this has now been corrected to Ewa Pasikowska.](#)