



## MELBOURNE FESTIVAL REVIEW

### OPENING NIGHT

#### Playhouse, The Arts Centre

Toneelgroep Amsterdam did their John Cassavetes thing with much verve and hilarity at the Arts Centre. This was a rollicking show full of fine, very fine, acting and a keep-you-on-your-toes script. Am glad now that I hadn't seen the 1977 film and so didn't know how the story played out; this theatre version of a play being rehearsed and a doco being made of the proceedings was gripping and hugely entertaining viewing.

Seeing the action and subtitles (the play was in Dutch) on large video screens added to the sense of being in a theatre and a cinema at the same time. *Opening Night* is an exciting piece with a subplot of magic realism, good characterization, especially the leads, plenty going

on at all times along with superb acting that you also see in extreme close-up.

Acclaimed actress Elsie de Brouw is astonishingly good at portraying a performer on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The writer, Sarah, played by Lien de Graeve is overdone, the least convincing part. Hadewych Minis as the girl ghost moves from light to dark most convincingly, a really fun role.

The play is sympathetic to all its characters while having a sharp dig at the fragility of the artist's ego and the fraught attempts to 'tell the truth whatever that may be. There are some dated assumptions underlying the whole piece about women's attitudes to aging that at moments don't ring true, but hey, this was written by a bloke decades ago.

#### *Season finished*

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