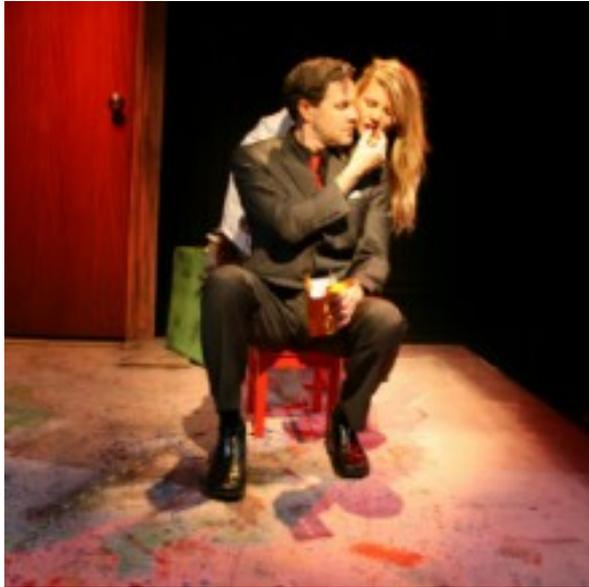


The Cat in the Box

By [Carol Flavell Neist](#) artsHub | Monday, August 06, 2012



James Helm and Summer Williams in *The Cat in the Box*. Photo by Tineke Van der Eecken.

The Blue Room, a very intimate theatre in the heart of Perth, is noted for its avant-garde productions, and *The Cat in the Box* is certainly avant-garde in its conception if not its execution. The title suggests that we might be on the trail of Schrodinger's Cat, yet it is not so much quantum physics and alternate realities we investigate here: rather, it is the 'proper study of mankind' which drama of all kinds has always been very good at scrutinizing.

In her introduction, author Vivienne Glance does suggest that she is examining the practice of conceptual art alongside the concept of quantum indeterminacy, but perhaps we don't need to consider anything quite that esoteric to enjoy this play. Glance also says that she is investigating 'the contrasts and similarities between art and science, religion and power' which for this theatre-goer, at least, constitute safer territory than Schrodinger and his dead/alive feline.

The action takes place within a locked room. Four characters are within. One is already there when the play starts. He is Peadon Gamboge (played by Kingsley Judd) a hippie dreamer who is 'waiting for the prophet'. He is soon joined by Acalypha Schwartz (Anna Brockway), an installation artist who has put together an impressive pile of junk as her latest creation. It's her work, her junk, her room, and why doesn't Peadon just piss off?

He can't leave. Neither can she. The door will not open from the inside.

Soon it opens again from without to admit Cincerea Blanca (Summer Williams), a research scientist; shortly afterwards, Reep (James Helm), our fourth character, comes in. The interplay of attitudes, ideas, emotional states and beliefs among these four constitute the stuff of which the play is built. The names were carefully chosen, I suspect, their meanings or sounds each casting some light on the character concerned.

All this is familiar territory. What makes it fresh and enjoyable is Glance's light and often amusing script, well-realised by the very competent cast. Judd gives us a version of Everyman, fearful, seeking meaning and safety. Acalypha, despite her artistic leanings, is a wannabe of sorts, getting in Reep's good books in the hope of reward. Cincerea is firm in her conviction that science, given time, can answer all life's problems, and when this belief is taken away from her she dissolves into a blubbering mess. And the charismatic Reep seeks to reap what he can from the situation: after all he sees himself as peerless. We are led to consider the nature of reality and other deep'n'meaningfuls, yet we're entertained and amused while doing it. Perhaps the play would be improved by more humour and a bit of judicious cutting, but as it stands it's still a worthwhile night out.

Mark Banford's direction and design interpret Glance's light touch well, and depth is added by the beautiful, haunting music of Jangoo Chapkhana – recorded by Courtney Pittman – and the excellent lighting of Chris Donnelly. The season continues until August 18.

Rating 3 ½ stars out of 5

Follow that Cat Productions presents *The Cat in the Box* By Vivienne Glance Dramaturge: John Aitken Director/Designer: Mark Barford Design Realisation: Emma Flavell Music: Jangoo Chapkhana Sung by Courtney Pittman Lighting Designer: Chris Donnelly Stage Manager: Paula Coops Cast: Anna Brockway, James Helm, Kingsley Judd, Summer Williams

The Blue Room Theatre, Northbridge July 31 – August 18