



The HERALD

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Dance

THE BROTHERS VERY GRIMM, THE ARCHES, GLASGOW

MARY BRENNAN

★★★★★

MORE GRIM(M) DESIRES, THE TRAVERSE, EDINBURGH

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THERE'S something decidedly Grimm in the air: this past weekend, two dance companies have ventured into the tangled, thorny undergrowth of the fairytales and emerged with very different pieces of dramatic choreography.

The Brothers Very Grimm sees Sean Tuan John and Bert van Gorp, in matching brown suits and harum-scarum black wigs, mooch on-stage as modern misfit twins with a penchant for telling tales of a sordid, horrid kind. It's their mum's fault, actually.

"Mother was a very nasty woman," they tell us, reciting a staccato litany of her threats, abuses and betrayals – she had them committed, as insane, when they were 11. They stayed in the system for 20 years, making this as much a grim indictment of care in our community as an exploration of violence, fantasy, repressed sexuality and obsessions (some of which are shown on TV monitors). The words are only the tip of the iceberg. The full measure of how damaged and driven they are is astutely expressed through hyper-active gestural

details; hands claw restlessly, fingers point accusingly or snip-snip in dire warning. Their manic bouts of energy or automaton-like (drugged?) synchronicity are funny but distressing. You sense there won't be a happy ending for men who are juveniles caught in an emotional

limbo.

More Grim(m) Desires selects five stories and links most of the characters into one dysfunctional family where greed, cruelty, envy and murder are the order of the day. An unseen narrator, the dryly humorous Russell

abreast of the tweaks and subversive revisions made by the choreographer, Maresa von Stockert, to suggest that abuse and fear can reverberate across generations.

Hers is a surreal, visceral evocation of the humiliations suffered by Grimm heroines. Rapunzel, bereft of her locks, is rough-housed by a court where long hair represents status. Her cutting revenge sees the stage vanish under shorn tresses, but she in turn will be targeted by step-daughter Snow White and will dance to her death in red hot shoes when the girl marries... Bluebeard. There are so many amazing visual moments, such witty props and humorous touches that it's easy to take the choreography for granted. It is full of marvellous invention, mostly frisky and physically daring, but also, as when Snow White duets with Bluebeard, sensual and surprisingly poignant.