

# Double twist



**JOE: THE PERFECT MAN** by Rachelle

Elie, directed by Adam Lazarus. Rating: **NNN** and **UNICORN HORNS** by Melissa Major, directed by Aleksandar Lukac (Crowning Monkey/The Cheshire Unicorn). Rating: **NNNNN**. Theatre Passe Muraille Backspace (16 Ryerson). To November 18. Pwyc-\$25. See Continuing, page 81. 416-504-7529.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE WATCHING A human train wreck in action.

If you're the type that takes pleasure in watching people suffer, you'll get a schadenfreudian kick out of **Joe: The Perfect Man** and **Unicorn Horns**, two performance-driven tragic comedies currently showing at Passe Muraille.

In the opener, **Joe: The Perfect Man**, **Rachelle Elie** plays modern-day buffoon Joe, a gap-toothed, 59-year-old schoolteacher (think Steve Carrell meets Stuart McLean) who wanders into an audition for Macbeth hellbent on winning the title role. Joe isn't content to deliver a simple two-minute monologue.

Oh, no. He has to impress the director by performing the tragedy as a rock-opera ballet.

Under the direction of buffoon king **Adam Lazarus**, Elie reaches a zenith of silliness, especially in the rock-opera bit, which has Joe pulling out a smorgasbord's-worth of colourful noise-making devices and inviting audience members to whip Q-Tips, Rocky Horror Picture-style, into the fray.

Unfortunately, Joe's character is a little overblown at times, especially at the beginning, where verbal ticks

(like an abrasive propensity to say "beeeubbs!") distract. Kinda feels like getting hit in the face with a giant pie, even if the crust is tasty.

The plot may not be exactly clear in **Melissa Major's** surrealist play **Unicorn Horns**, but that doesn't matter. Major plays the androgynous Quiche, a wannabe actor who awakens after his/her 714th audition to discover that his/her husband has quite literally gone flat (as in paper-thin).

Major brings dark humour and a seemingly bottomless reserve of raw emotion to the role, and under the direction of **Aleksandar Lukac**, the pace never slackens. Major hops deftly from scene to scene – from ascetic doctor's office to grotty alley to dingy basement – until the play's surprisingly tender end.

LEAH CAMERON