

It's alive! Death and theater

Chad Jones, Theater Dogs, October 26, 2009

Two extraordinary shows are lighting up Bay Area stages, and in each of them, the specter of death hovers in the shadows.

In Trevor Allen's intelligent, compassionate adaptation of Frankenstein at the Thick House, Victor Frankenstein defies death by creating life from dead parts and cowering from the unexpected results.

Over at Intersection for the Arts, Campo Santo and the Erika Chong Shuch Performance Project ponder the death of a goldfish and, through engaging text and movement, ruminate on the nature of life and breath in *The Future Project: Sunday Will Come*.

Both pieces, while they couldn't be more different from one another, are completely compelling and find grace amid seriously dark subject matter.

In *Sunday*, a whole troupe of people, led by performers Erika Chong Shuch and Sean San José, have created a simple, hour-long three-hander about a seemingly small matter – a man and woman (Shuch and Sean José) contemplate the illness and imminent death of their goldfish. They act out the creature's fight for breath through some extraordinary movement on a small but sturdy table, and their discussion of this aquatic mortality resonates in larger waves.

Troubadour Denizen Kane weaves in and out of the central action, lending the tale his soulful voice and songs that give the show a soothing pulse and a throbbing heart.

There's none of the pretension that can come from a hybrid dance-theater-music-spoken word piece because the performers are so incredibly focused, so funny and so intensely emotional. They seem to live partly in the world of boring, normal people and partly in the world of extraordinarily talented artists who sing and move and speak on an entirely different, entirely dazzling plane.