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“PHANTASMAGORIA” EXPLORES PANDEMIC STRUGGLES—STREAMING CUTTING BALL

📅 May 6, 2021 (<https://Theatrius.Com/2021/05/06/Phantasmagoria-Explores-Pandemic-Struggles-Streaming-Cutting-Ball/>) 👤 Patricia L. Morin
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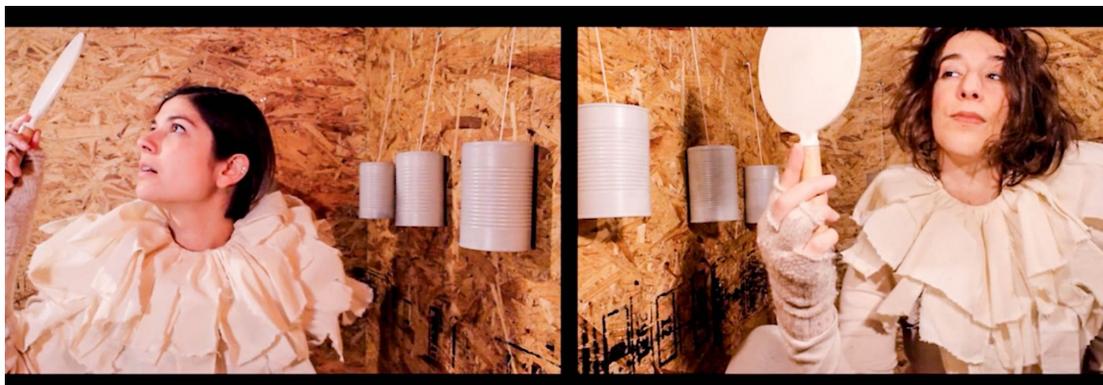
Ariel Craft Conjures a Wonderland of Prophetic Phantoms

by **Patricia L. Morin**

Cutting Ball Theater—with Bay Area Theatre Cypher and Mugwumpin—have filmed an impressive paranormal fairy tale, blending Lewis Carroll’s poetic fantasies with post-Pandemic fears.

Four visiting Phantoms, and deep voices from the future, taunt imprisoned twins fearful to reunite and become one whole person. They resist moving into a new psychological and physical “normalcy,” representing what many of us are going through today.

They want to know, “How will life be different?”



Akaina Ghosh (Ghostie) & Maria Marquis (Ghosty). Photo: Cutting Ball Theater

Dressed in identical garb, the quarantined pair, Ghostie (expressive Akaina Ghosh) and Ghosty (bold Maria Marquis), are held captive in small, separate chambers. Steel-gray tin cans on strings serve as primitive “phones,” connecting them to mysterious voices from the future.

They whisper to each other, mouths covered by the tin cans, their voices almost inaudible. We can hear them say, “Disappearing self” and “I don’t know who I’m going to be one moment to another.” Like ghosts, they feel invisible. Yet, while Ghostie cowers, Ghosty is excited to explore a new world.

The mystery deepens as the cans ring and garbled messages in different voices address them. A loud, continuously ticking clock drowns their responses. A deep voice speaks through hand-held mirrors from the future; then a phantom appears on the screen, and we are carried into their illusion, and their message.

Mugwumpin’s Black Baba struts. Photo: Julie Schuchard

Mugwumpin’s Black Bubba, the first apparition, is draped head-to-toe in thick clumps of black cloth. He raps, “This is real,” with photos of cemeteries, immigrants, and darkness flashing in the background. As we relive the horrors of the pandemic year, hard rock music diminishes the feelings.

Christine Crook’s has created artistic “out of this world” costumes for Mugwumpin’s four Phantoms, capturing the essence of each monster’s message.

In response, the trapped pair touch their faces, eyes, and noses, breaking through invisibility, asking “Who am I?”

Mugwumpin’s Big Pink dances. Photo: Julie Schuchard

The other three apparitions spew sentences that are sometime so phrenetic, they are hard to follow. Yet, at other times, their rap is crystal clear and melodic, capturing our undivided attention.

Studying themselves through the looking glass, the twins wave to each other, recognizing the other part of them. Ghosty feels the change; Ghostie struggles with riddles from the voice in the future. “Step inside your ghost, and you will see all.”

With taut direction and swift pacing, Ariel Craft artfully pulls together Cutting Ball, Cypher, and Mugwumpin to make a potent theatrical cocktail. Eclectic Sound Designer James Ard mixes a cornucopia of sound and music—from soft murmurs to rap to heavy metal.

Akaina Ghosh & Maria Marquis

An “Exit Eject” sign falls in front of them after the huge fuzzy pink teddy-bear illusion encourages them to move on, relax, and resist complacency. But they hesitate to cross over.

We, too, are at that spot now, exiting into the world, unmasked, visible, but still fearing the future. I recommend visiting this fifty-minute wonderland of surprises—a fantastic voyage into parts of ourselves during the Covid crisis.

“**Phantasmagoria**” – A collaborative film by **Cutting Ball Theater, Bay Area Theatre Cypher, and Mugwumpin**, co-devised by **Ariel Craft, Akaina Ghosh, Maya Herbsman, and Maria Marquis** from *Phantasmagoria*, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carroll, directed by **Ariel Craft**. Streaming at: **CuttingBall.org** (<https://cuttingball.com/productions/phantasmagoria>) – to May 23, 2021.

Cast: **Akaina Ghosh** and **Maria Marquis**, with **Black Bubba, Carlos Aguirre, May Ramos, Dan Wolf, and Phil Wong**.

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