

Review: ANY NIGHT by Elizabeth V. Newman Productions at City Theatre, September 21 - October 9, 2016

by Michael Meigs (/about/reviewers/#michael-meigs)

Any night you participate in this disquieting evening at City Theatre you'll be seeing two actors-- but at least nine characters. Or, to put it a different way, in the eerie ninety minutes you'll be spending in this netherworld, slim and vulnerable Marie Rose Fahlgren will flicker between states of reality as Anna, an earnest and emotional young woman trying to break away from a former relationship. Zac Thomas will be variously geeky stammering Patrick, lodging with the same landlady, three other characters in this isolated world, and at least two additional variants of Patrick. Thomas provides the only other human contacts for Fahlgren, the presences that build a world that presents itself as refuge, welcome, mirage, trap and dream.

What grips you in the twists and turns of these narratives is that you can't be entirely sure which of them are real, or the extent to which they're accurate. The scenes are marked by sudden and unexpected physical action, part muscular dance and part grappling, as Fahlgren and Thomas abandon those defined characters entirely and for a few brief moments become abstract figures in a ballet of movement that foreshadows abandonment, trust, struggle, trance and death. Choreography is by Erica Gionfriddo.

On one level there's a story easily told: Anna, a dancer, escapes a stifling relationship by taking a basement apartment in an old house. Patrick, the other lodger, helps her set up. Inevitably, as the days and weeks pass they become close and then intimate, exchanging confidences. We begin to understand that Anna is suffering from some deep spiritual distress that manifests itself in nightmares, waking dreams and sleepwalking. Patrick may have brought her into this place to exploit those conditions.

Or perhaps not. The playwrights may have inserted us all unawares into Anna's delusions. There's a steady build in the tension here, precisely managed by director Elizabeth Newman and the two actors. We as watchers become complicit with each of the major characters, Anna and Patrick. Fahlgren with her expressive features and slim pajama-clad figure presents the epitome of fragility, but there's a ferocity to her, especially in those trance states, that provokes our misgivings. Thomas's efforts as Patrick to behave with correctness and a sort of shambling gallantry are gradually tinted and then poisoned by the revelations of the plot -- which may or may not be true in the imaginary worlds before us.

Most of all, this is a fable about trust. Face value cannot be assumed. Face is valueless here; faces may be masks or, equally, those who see them may be delusional.



Marie Rose Fahlgren, Zac Thomas (photo: EVN Productions)



Zac Thomas, Marie Rose Fahlgren (photo: EVT Productions)

The plotting is clever but the swift emotional movement of events sweeps us past some dangling threads. Later these will pull at the fabric of the story and create uncertainties.

- Anna is working on a dance project but can't find an ending to it, and Patrick the computer geek tells her that sensors on dancers' bodies can create patterns -- later he slips back into his room and fixes wires and tabs like EKG electrodes to his chest, then covers himself again. Why? Or did we/she only imagine that?
- Anna's former apartment mate Ben finds her quickly, speaks sharply but then goes away; later, as Anna starts feeling encaged, she gets back to the apartment and reasserts her control, saying confidently that she sought out Ben and settled their differences. Her behavior reinforces that declaration. But where is Ben?
- And most disturbing of all is a scene played out at the hospital where Patrick's a volunteer janitor part-time. We hear him

dialoguing with an unseen overnight staffer who may be a physician. Remarks are made that are crude, out of place and unprofessional of both men. Later we witness an intrusion that would have brought an ethics committee or administrator down on both of them like a ton of bricks. The alarmed staffer never appears. No retribution occurs.



(photo: EVN Productions)

You'll have time for those reflections afterwards. While Fahlgren and Thomas are before you in the dark rooms of their minds amid the powerfully symbolic disorder and randomness of Vanessa Montano's set design, you'll be holding tight to your seat as the action builds to a decisive and unequal confrontation of threat and violent surprise.

EXTRA

Click to view the program for EVM Productions' **Any Night**
(/static/media/uploads/documents/program_notes/any_night_evn_2016.pdf)

Any Night (/productions/any-night-by-evn-productions/)

by Daniel Arnold and Medina Hahn (EVN Productions)
EVN Productions (/local_theatres/evn-productions/)

Thursdays-Sundays,

September 22 - October 09, 2016

City Theatre

(<https://www.google.com/maps/place/City+Theater+Co/@30.28853,-97.706666,15z/data=!4m2!3m1!1s0x0:0xf7d0ac2dadfd908>)

3823 Airport Boulevard

Austin, TX, 78722

Performances will be presented at The City Theatre, 3823 Airport Blvd. Austin, TX 78722

Performances during Limited Run will be given September 22nd - October 9th; Thursdays - Saturdays 8pm; Sundays 5 pm.

Tickets to the 90-minute play are \$20 plus service fee and are available online at



(<http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2598076>)

More Info is available at AnyNightAustin.com (<http://www.anynightaustin.com>)

EVN Productions Presents the Austin Premiere of

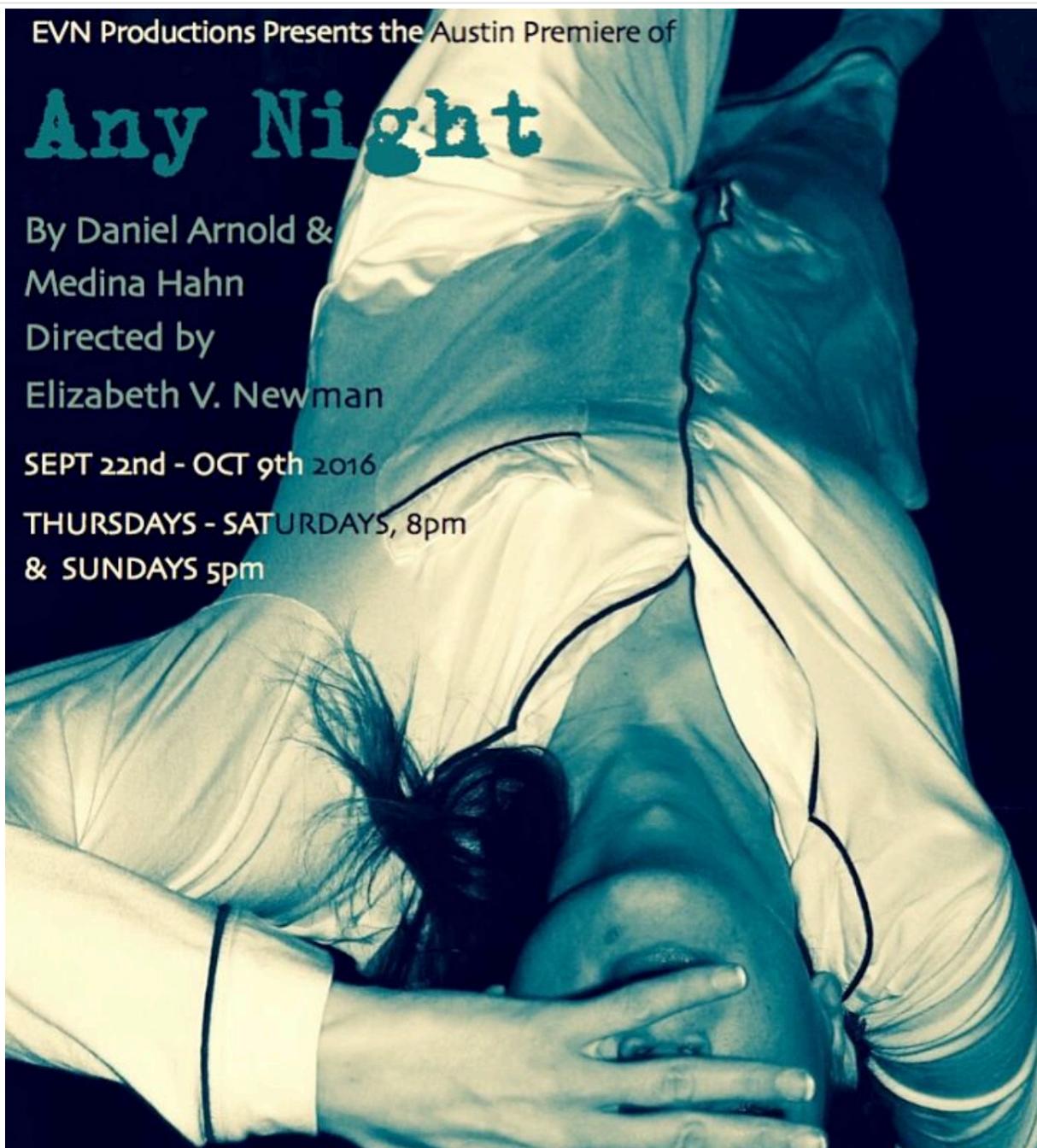
Any Night

By Daniel Arnold &
Medina Hahn

Directed by
Elizabeth V. Newman

SEPT 22nd - OCT 9th 2016

THURSDAYS - SATURDAYS, 8pm
& SUNDAYS 5pm





@ City Theatre
3823 Airport Blvd. Suite D, 78722
Info: AnyNightAustin.com
Tickets: BrownPaperTickets.com

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About the Reviewer

Michael Meigs established **AustinLiveTheatre.com**, now CTXLiveTheatre.com, in June, 2008. He has published more than 700 reviews of live narrative theatre produced in Central Texas. He extended the site ...

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About EVN Productions

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CTX Live Theatre is a project — or maybe no more than a hobby, bordering on a quiet obsession — devoted to supporting live narrative theatre in Central Texas. It is maintained by Michael Meigs and fueled by the passion of the theatre community in the Austin–San Antonio area.



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