



## Fringe Review: Renfield: In the Shadow of the Vampire 3 STARS

A retelling of Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' from the perspective of Renfield – the spider eating inmate of Dr Seward's Asylum.

By [Rod Lewis](#) on Mar 05, 2020 [Fa](#)

Presented by Grist To the Mill Productions Ltd

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The world premiere of this work-in-progress introduces the audience to the mind of one of classic literature's most cherished madmen.

Renfield is a character from Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic-horror novel *Dracula*, who is locked in an asylum for the insane. He eats live insects in the hope of consuming their life-force. His overseer, Dr John Stewart, believes Renfield to be delusional when, in fact, he has a psychic link to the master vampire.

Solo performer Ross Ericson engages for the hour-long show, but this is currently an actor's piece, potentially limiting any attraction to broader fans of the original tale. The script is stagey and at times, slightly abstract as the character jumps between conversations with himself, an alternative personality, and the audience. The distinction is not always immediately clear and the unfolding dialogue relies a little too much on the audience knowing the source material.

Death by blackout is a real possibility long before Dracula arrives on the scene. There's no less than 10 of them over the course of the hour. The play needs some reworking and the dialogue needs checking – at one point, Renfield questions how a sparrow could enter his cell since it can't fly through walls despite having earlier admired the moon, presumably through a cell window.

Regardless of its faults, *Renfield: In the Shadow of the Vampire* offers a lot of potential and it must be acknowledged that its first outing as a work-in-progress was more than just a passing curiosity. Ericson embellishes the drama with nice touches of humour and some interesting introspective dialogue as his character faces the inner turmoil of having to take a life. The colourless set and costume, and the plain lighting give the production an eerie hue that is quite effective.

The company is seeking anonymous feedback at the end of the play and it's well worth catching this production now so it can be revisited again at a future time to see how it has developed. Its potential is quite exciting.

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