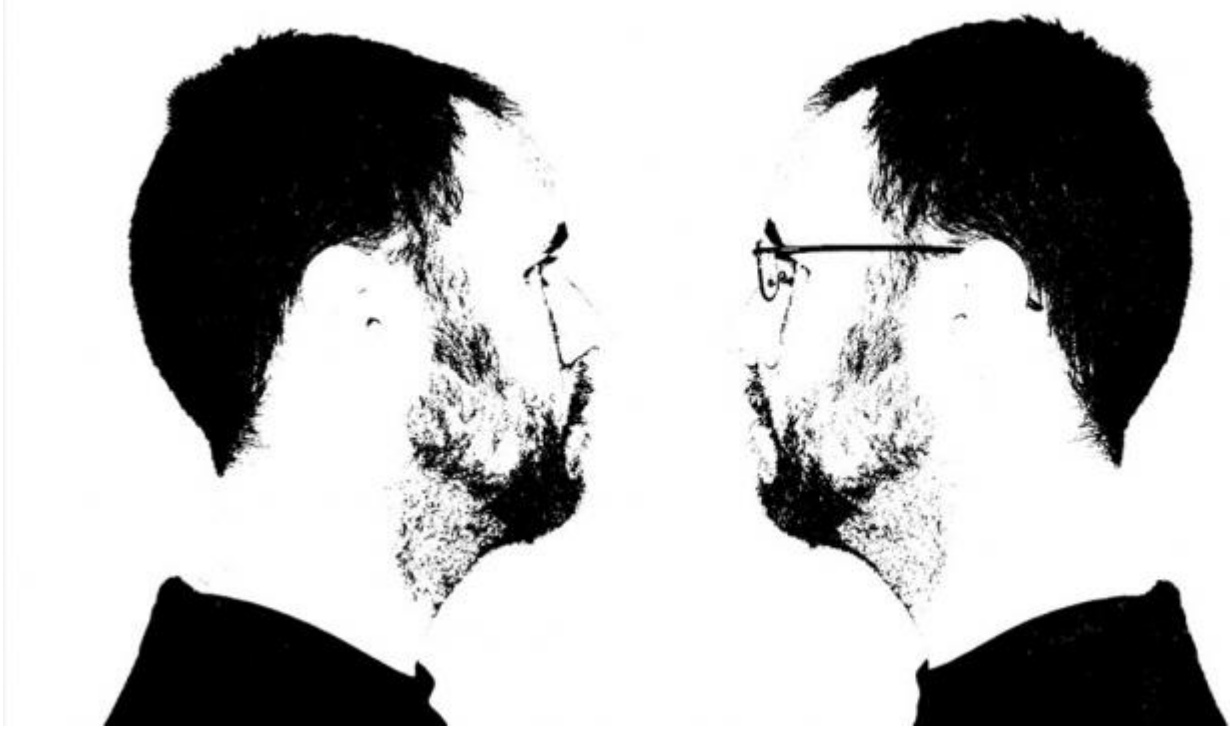


Dawson Nichols' non-stop surreal dream

GREG ELLIOTT | 17 FEBRUARY 2015



ADELAIDE FRINGE REVIEW | Dawson Nichols is a brilliant storyteller and Adelaide audiences will remember him for his previous one-man show, *I Might be Edgar Allen Poe*. Peter Brook has written that all you need for good theatre is an empty space (and an actor and audience). Nichols requires only a chair in his latest show, *Stop Start*, staged in the appropriately intimate Bakehouse Theatre.

In essence, he plays a character being filled with embalming fluid, but *Stop Start* defies definitions and boundaries as it is essentially a non-stop surreal dream spoken in rapid-fire delivery (with perfect diction). Nichols' exceptionally expressive face and animated voice transition seamlessly from character to character while, simultaneously, his hands and body communicate another story or emotion.

Stop Start may be the dream-like, confused, rambling thoughts and powerful imagery of a near-death experience: life flashing before your eyes in an instant. Or it may be a man associated with drug taking reliving one hallucination after another. The definitive interpretation is not so important here: Nichols' acting, intensity, sense of comedy and fusion of universal myths and stories with modern anecdotes is unique.

His characters are addicted to caffeine or other substances: they want to speed to the end or delay its arrival. While they face family revelations and undergo incredibly lucid, visual experiences rich in metaphor and illusion, the audience is taken on an unforgettable ride.

Stop Start is totally engaging and Dawson Nichols invites his audience to enter his imaginative world: his skill is such that you are involved from the opening second to the final image.

Stop Start is being performed at the Bakehouse Theatre until February 21, and then again from March 2-7.