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## **Review: 'The Moors' @ Bridge Street Theatre, 5/30/19**

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April Armstrong and Molly Parker Myers in "The Moors" at Bridge Street Theatre. (BST publicity photo by John Sowle.)

CATSKILL — The melancholic, philosophizing mastiff is in love with a moor-hen, the two maids may be the same person, perhaps there's a starving man bricked up in the attic, one of the resident sisters is being driven batty by the loneliness and the wind, and the wide-eyed governess has brought her lute to yet another creepy old house full of weirdness and secrets.

Also, there may be a hilarious musical number.

Such is the kooky, mischievous, genre-busting delight that is "The Moors," a work by up-and-coming playwright Jen Silverman that is being given a pitch-perfect staging by Bridge Street Theatre.

It is hard to overstate how many ways a production of "The Moors" could go wrong, given Silverman's revisionist, feminist-minded mash-up of the Brontes, Gothic fiction, Sherlock Holmes and film noir. But the tone — as realized by Tracy Liz Miller, a six-member cast and designers who know how to make use of Bridge Street's space — is exactly right, from Shane Sczepankowski's mopey mastiff to the marvelously imperious and peremptory tone April Armstrong brings to the house's elder sister, Agatha.

The production's smart directorial choices are evident right from the start, when Agatha orders the maid (Lori Evans) to do something about the barrage of birds that keep smacking into the windows of the family's decaying manse on the moors of 1840s England. As the scene goes on with other conversation about the arrival of the governess (Kate McMorrان), the maid is seen in the background, outside, waving a handkerchief at the sky.

While the cast is uniformly excellent, it's would be a dereliction of critical duty not to spotlight the brilliance of Molly Parker Myers' performance as Hudley, the younger sister of the house. Excitable, deluded and dramatic in entertaining ways, Myers brings to mind the best of Jane Krakowski's daffy characters, but Myers is always her own performer, barely hiding Huldey's desperation and the nearness she is to becoming fully unhinged. When she does, it's a bravura turn.

While Thursday's preview performance, the first for the cast in front of an audience, felt attenuated in its final 20 minutes, especially during the last scene between the dog and the moorhen (Bonnie Black), the production should tighten during the run. In any case, all quibbles are minor. "The Moors" is yet further evidence of the rewarding ways Bridge Street is enriching our theater scene.

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