

**HERALD SUN - Tuesday 05/05/09**

**3xSisters**

**Where:** The Hayloft Project at the Meat Market, North Melbourne, until May 10

**Reviewer:** Chris Boyd

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As a general rule, theatre that tries to do what film and television do - and do so easily - will leave you wishing you had opted to see a film or stayed home in front of the flat screen.

Funnily enough, on the rare occasions that screen artists use the tricks of the stage trade, the work benefits immeasurably.

Think of *Six Feet Under*, which allowed its actors to bring something of themselves to their roles and the scripts, as with a stage improvisation, or Jonathan Demme's recent film *Rachel Getting Married*, with its cast of fleshy, irritating, complex and unusually three-dimensional characters. People you can walk around, can love and hate. So, even mainstream films can be written, rehearsed and directed like plays.

Hayloft's extraordinary cut-up adaptation of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* has three directors, taking turns. It's as exciting and radical a project as Rolf de Heer's *Bad Boy Bobby*, with its thirty-one directors of photography.

The three directors - Benedict Hardie, Simon Stone and Mark Winter - wear their influences on their sleeves. Many of them are film and television directors. People such as David Lynch (especially *Twin Peaks*) and Louis Malle (*Vanya on 42nd Street*). Others are stage directors, like Romeo Castellucci and Robert Wilson.

All of these artists - Hardie, Stone and Winter included - are rule breakers. *3xSisters* might be a mess, a bloody mess, but it's anything but anarchic. It's a disciplined breakdown of order. A huge amount of energy is expended breaking windows to let in the breeze, but it's refreshing and revitalising, both to audiences and to theatre itself.

Actually, the breeze is more like a hurricane. The long first act of *3xSisters* is excessive, at times grindingly so. It is deliberately shocking and stormy. But it manages to fracture time, both historical time (are we watching the execution of the Romanov family or a Columbine-style shoot-up?) and stage time.

Acting is miraculously good, the design ingenious, the concept realised. You'll love it or loathe it. I doubt you'll ever forget it.