

## Edmonton Sun Review

### Grim & Fischer: a deathly comedy in full-face mask

By Mike Ross

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#### ***5/5 stars***

Anyone who has lost someone they loved should expect to be deeply moved by this imaginative encounter with the Grim Reaper - and what do you know, that's everybody. We all die. You can do it the easy way, or you can do it the hard way.

There's a little of both in this remarkable glimpse into the last days of an elderly woman, told, as advertised, by characters in full mask and entirely without dialogue.

Mrs. Fischer is a mischievous old lady, given to playing pranks on the male nurse as he arrives daily with her newspaper and a snack. She always manages to avoid seeing him face to face, at one point fending him off with an apparent attack of flatulence. Meanwhile, she sits in her lonely room, and tries to stay fit by watching aerobics on TV as she remembers her beloved late husband, whose coat still hangs on a hook nearby.

Soon she has another visitor. You guessed it: It's the Grim Reaper. He's come to serve her with a black envelope. She flushes it down the toilet. And that's just the beginning of a riotous tragi-comic slapstick farce that literally laughs in the face of Death. Use any other cliché you want: Dance with Death, knocking at Death's door, cheating Death, the canny old lady tries everything she can. It's hilariously macabre.

That is, until, in emotional gut drops that amazingly never feel maudlin, things get serious. Her heart is weak. Mrs. Fischer is not long for this world. In the end, sadly, both literally and figuratively, there is no way to avoid her date with Death. That's no spoiler. We saw that coming, remember?

A common story handled with originality and haunting, evocative performances is

made sublime with a soundtrack that relies heavily on Chopin's Nocturne In E Flat Major - a piece rich in mortal melancholy. It can't be coincidence that Chopin also wrote the "famous" funeral march that can be identified in six notes. There are also a few musical surprises along the way to the Final Curtain.

It sounds crass to sum this up with a cliché blurb, but in this case, it is perfectly true: You will laugh, you will cry, you will stand in awe that two mimes in masks can evoke such powerful feelings.

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