



THE FORTUNE TELLER

at Here Arts Center

Among the credits for *The Fortune Teller*, Erik Sanko's marvelously creepy marionette play, is a 17-member "interior design team." Working in black, white, and gray, this team has beautifully realized architectural designer Selin Maner and interior set designer Jessica Grindstaff's visions. Behind the façade of what recalls a Southern mansion lurk not only a huge dining room but also seven highly detailed interiors, the homes and workplaces of seven characters, who have been called to the mansion to hear the reading of a will.

The will, belonging to Nathaniel Ax, states that his heirs are to be designated by a fortune teller whom he hired prior to his death. After the mysterious seer appears, seemingly from nowhere, he predicts that each man will die a gruesome death stemming from his self-absorbed ways. (The gluttonous cook, for instance, will choke on a wishbone after consuming an entire roast chicken.)

This perfect pre-Halloween morality play, with a twist ending worthy of *The Twilight Zone*, features the voice of Gavin Friday, who reads Sanko's words with eerie power. Even as the play induces tingles and bemused smiles, the craftsmanship of the entire production astounds. In addition to the ingeniously convertible mansion (artfully concealing puppeteers Matthew Acheson, Liam Hurley, Randall Whittinghill, and Sanko), there are Sanko's vintage clothing-clad marionettes with their exquisite facial details. A huge bulbous nose and beady eyes are the chief characteristics of the cook, while the blacksmith, described as an "oil-soaked silhouette of debasement," is a sylph of a creature with a beak nose and frightening protective goggles.

The entire show is underscored by Danny Elfman and Sanko's delicious and whimsically ominous score, the final touch in this grandly satisfying piece of theatre in miniature.

*Presented by Here's Dream Music Puppetry Program
at Here Arts Center, 145 Sixth Ave., NYC.*

*Oct. 19–Nov. 5. Thu.–Mon., 7 p.m. (Additional performances Sat., Oct. 28, 10 p.m., and Tue., Oct. 31, 9 p.m.)
(212) 352-3101 or www.theatermania.com.*

Reviewed by Andy Propst

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