**Weeping Woman**

[](http://www.portlandmercury.com/imager/weeping-woman-stark-raving-theatre-2257-nw-raleigh-232-7072-thursday/b/original/815417/62cb/theater-8819.jpeg)

* Weeping Woman Stark Raving Theatre, 2257 NW Raleigh, 232-7072, Thursday-Saturday 8 pm, Sunday 7 pm, through October 11, $10-$18

The opening of *Weeping Woman* hereby wins the coveted Make Erik Nearly Shit His Pants From Girlish Fright Award. On a pitch black and otherwise silent set, ghostly whispers begin in the theater's aisles, growing in eerie intensity as two women creep out from the audience, crawling menacingly towards the stage. Within moments, a third woman lunges, wet and screaming, from a watery pit onstage, while another calmly sits, talking to herself and intently petting a teddy bear.

Screaming. Creepy whispers. Teddy bears. I do not give out this award lightly.

That haunting tone is held throughout Stark Raving Theater's production of Amy Wheeler's play, which focuses on a young woman, her mother, and two variable entities, "the Furies." Awakened at the beginning of the play with only the knowledge that she's done "something horrible," the woman must work with the Furies and her mother to discover what she's done.

It's a chilling idea, stylishly directed by Michelle Seaton and Stef Sertich, and backed by a storytelling device ripe with explosive potential. Unfortunately, despite its stellar opening sequences, *Woman* never quite manages to shift into fifth gear. When the woman's supposedly shocking deed is revealed--surprisingly early on--it fails to cause the intended impact. The major plot point is neither mysterious nor haunting, and instead feels cheaply cribbed from a relatively recent major news event.

Casey McDermott is intense while remaining vulnerable and Cecily Overman and Siouxsie Suarez, as the Furies, are really, really good at being really, really creepy. The only questionable cast member is Mindi L. Logan, who, as the mother, hits most points solidly but occasionally overacts her way into shakily maudlin territory. Her performance is indicative of a larger problem with the play: there's a thin line between intense drama and Lifetime TV movie melodrama, and throughout *Weeping Woman*, that line is toed, pushed, prodded, and even ignored, the characters' larger-than-life emotional reactions frequently infringing on the play's stylized, yet gritty believability.

Nevertheless, despite these shortcomings, *Weeping Woman* remains an impressive feat: a largely involving, daring, and yes, even girlishly fright-inducing theatrical experience. ERIK HENRIKSEN