

FRINGE REVIEW – Haunted, Dance Base

11-22 Aug, times vary @ [Dance Base](#)

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By Julie Dawson



The audience enters to an atmosphere already heavy with expectation, as Leah and Chloe Smith of Rising Appalachia use voice and simple percussion to evoke a hot and ominous Southern night, whilst Kofi Dennis lounges on a seat at the back. All are dressed in striking white and gradually, sinuously make their way through the audience to the stage.

There they are joined by dancers and choreographers Stephen Clapp and Laura Schandelmeier for a mesmerising, atmospheric performance. The dancers begin with a ouija board and are soon struggling with unknown forces. As in all the best ghost stories, the evil presence cannot be seen, only felt, so it is down to the dancers to convey this story of demonic possession (based on the true story that inspired “The Exorcist”) through their movements alone. The result is both incredibly skilled and genuinely unsettling.

Clapp and Schandelmeier, gifted though they are, do have some help. The entire soundtrack is provided by Rising Appalachia and Kofi Dennis and it adds immeasurably to the experience. From a capella gospel to primitive percussion, the music is as hypnotic as the dance and the two elements together are in perfect harmony.

It is also telling that Catherine Eliot, the lighting designer, gets a paragraph in the programme, for the lighting for this show is a work of art in itself. With flickering candlelight, a projected ouija board, and simple yet dramatic effects throughout, Eliot’s work is absolutely essential to creating the atmosphere of this piece.

This is the perfect example of three different disciplines coming together, with real artisans in each field, to create something truly magical. For fans of dance, music, or things that go bump in the night, this is an experience not to be missed.