



# THE SCOTSMAN

11 August 2000

## Down and out thespian tragedy

### Graft – Tales of an Actor

Komedia @ Southside ★★★★★

**IN THIS** new piece based on stories by Steven Berkoff, George Dillon introduces us to Harry. From working-class guy with a chip on his shoulder to hesitant thespian to "angrily" inspired student to sad old man with his nose pressed up against the window of an actor's pub, we follow most steps of the curious acting profession which can not only bring fame and glory, but whose punishing and often cruel practices constantly challenge a sense of identity. Or is it simply that already vulnerable people are attracted to the would-be bright lights?

Dillon - who has a long history of working with Berkoff's material - has a perfect grasp of the writer's performance style:

disturbingly intense to the point of histrionic. Deft use of cliché and formulaic language frame acute moments of insight, while witty one-liners expose the self-conscious, destructive feelings often associated with the profession: bitchiness, jealousy, envy, and ultimately a complete lack of self-worth, fed by constantly criticising and painful "mind talk". An audience full of fellow thespians howled in constant recognition of this very inward-looking and quintessentially British persona.

It may be a case of "That's entertainment", but strangely enough there's no redeeming sense that it is a life well-spent as Harry desperately accepts his final job as the back legs of a donkey. Don't put your daughter on the stage, or even your son.

*Jan Fairley*