

REVIEW: PRACTICE OF ZEN (ONLINE)

AUTHOR: LOUISE PENN

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This 88 minute show, currently streaming at the Brighton Fringe, comprises several dramatic vignettes loosely linked together. Beautifully filmed, it takes time to find its focus, and one moment in which a song appears in English feels misplaced.

Practice of Zen considers the traditions, practicality, sensuality, and strength of swordplay and resilience. Performed in Cantonese with Chinese and English subtitles, this piece by Theatre Ronin of Hong Kong brings back the spirit of Wuxia through folkore and emotional connection.

Written, directed and designed by Alex Tam Hung Man, this is a strong piece which requires concentration and has the feel of an epic martial arts film in its construction. Think *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* or *House of Flying Daggers*, only not quite as showy or impossible in its stunt work. The movement is fluid, flowing, and fierce.



We are deep in the accepted tropes of Chinese literature with *Practice of Zen*, with a wide cast of characters (performed by Cheung Lee Hung Holmes, Leung Ho Pong, Chan Ting Hin Henry, Chiu Lo Yin, Karen Chan, Musette Tsang). The child who dreams of being a superhero becomes the adult seeking resolution and justice.

The description on the Fringe website states the show is “not a fairytale for grownups, but a medium to evoke thinking between the personal and the social.” For those not accustomed to the culture, that may be hard to define, but I found that some scenes had more resonance to me as a Western viewer than others which just felt bewildering and inaccessible.

Overall, this is a show which is not without interest, and the lighting design by Zoe Cheung, and music and sound design by Maj Chan are very good. It might not be for all audiences but if you stick with it, you might find something to enjoy or admire.

Practice of Zen is available during the Brighton Fringe until 5 June. Purchase your ticket [here](#).

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