

Dance

Grim(m) Desires

Wapping Project, London

★★★★☆

As the only expanding art form in Britain, modern dance is currently boasting a

13% growth in audience, year on year. Individual shows, however, rarely play for more than two nights at any venue, a trend being challenged by the Wapping Project. Not only has it commissioned Maresa von Stockert to create a new work for its Boiler House stage but it has allotted her a month-long run.

Grim(m) Desires is a modern spin on five fairy tales and the Boiler House couldn't be better designed for Stockert's purpose. Its massive pillars and shadowed chambers scream Freudian symbolism at every turn, while allowing Stockert, a dark artist in the matters of props and staging, to choreograph on an extraordinary, often terrifying, scale. When the witch in Rapunzel walks with slow,

haunting magic down one of the vaulting brick walls, triumphantly fondling the heroine's shorn locks in her hands, the image is as grand and scary as the silent movie demon Nosferatu.

Though Stockert's grasp of gothic is exemplary, she can also be very funny. The dancing is framed by short bursts of narrative, in which each story is cunningly linked to the next — Rapunzel marries a widowed king to become Snow White's (misunderstood) stepmother and in turn has the bad luck to attract the eye of Bluebeard. Each of the narratives also goes wickedly awry as in the fabulously fetishised telling of Cinderella, which has the prince developing a pathological fascination with shoes and forgetting all about the

slipper's beautiful owner.

Despite having only six performers, Stockert spins a dense web of dance and mime around these narratives. She's at her best when the movement is generated by props, such as the stepmother's writhingly narcissistic mirror dance in Snow White. If there's one failing in this 95-minute show, it's the presence of occasional longeurs into which the pure dance sections settle. But Stockert has a unique way of looking at the world — both scrupulously focused and wildly hallucinatory. Audiences should definitely make the trek out to Wapping.

Judith Mackrell

Until October 9.

Box office: 020-8544 7434.