

## Theater production broaches psychiatric health in modern life

City dwellers live life at a maddening pace. And while the urban jungle lets us experience incredible highs, its chaos can sometimes lead to those secretly anxious and depressive moments — side-effects of modern life that we just don't like talking about.

Yet here to fill the silence is *The Anatomy of Melancholy* — a new opera directed by Finn Beames, winner of the Genesis Future Directors Award at the Young Vic. If the first thing that comes to mind with opera, however, is well-heeled folk and songs about epic and lofty issues in other languages, think again.

Beame's libretto artfully draws parallels between medical and physical health through an exploration of depression, genetics and Renaissance medicine. And how does it do this? With a 75 minute bonanza of song, speech, mobile live-feed screens complete with a live orchestra.

Inspired by Robert Burton's 1621 epic medical text book — of the same name — which searches for the symptoms, causes and cures of "melancholy", the production compares Renaissance theory with contemporary research. But this isn't just an artsy portrayal of melancholia. Wanting to find a modern counterpart to Burton, Beames collaborated with molecular psychiatrist Professor Jonathan Flint, Head of the Psychiatric Genetics Group at the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics on his script. So the libretto includes some real research on genetics and depression that gets you thinking.

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