



Pou stars in "A Slight Headache."

## Family drama; another time

### Big mommy and tiny mummies at the seaport

**Alyson Pou pulls her many talents together in "A Slight Headache," an hour-long evocation of an act in a 19th century freak show.**

Drawing on a fusion of history, dream and imagination, and on her visual and performing skills, Pou transforms herself into a woman who births a daughter from her head.

Years later, the pair are still connected by their cascading auburn hair, an umbilicus that resists attempts at cutting.

Pou plays both roles, Mother merely turning her head to shed a couple of decades and become her beautiful teen offspring.

The transformation is simple and astonishing, a trick of the light; lines in her face disappear when she's the Daughter.

As gas lamps flicker, the play, accompanied on the piano by Maestro Matt Falber, is preceded by a tour of a "cabinet of curiosities" constructed by Pou, featuring bizarre items that later figure in the drama.

A bearded piranha, tiny mummies, the skull of a cyclops and outsize jewels are explicated by Gregory Cohen Frumin, the formally garbed guide who leads spectators from the deserted precincts of the Seaport back more than a century into Pou's magical universe.

Frumin also manipulates the shadow puppets that haunt the tiny stage, building detail into a story of magical powers and mythic dimensions.

As Mother sucks down laudanum — a painkiller containing opium — from a bottle secreted in her huge skirt, Daughter diagnoses her fatal illness using her supernatural sense of smell.

Jessica Bauman directs this remarkable undertaking with a sure hand.

It's the perfect capstone to a spring day at the Seaport.

**'A Slight Headache'  
Through April 19  
Melville Gallery  
South Street Seaport  
Museum  
213 Water St.**

**Elizabeth Zimmer**