

Theatre Review: Private Peaceful

BY JAN KERSHAW ON APRIL 6, 2018 ARTS, BREAKING, ENTERTAINMENT, PERFORMING ARTS, PERFORMING ARTS
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Presented by **Promise Adelaide**

Reviewed 5 April 2017



Ben Francis is a truly gifted actor and gave us a brilliant performance as Private Tommo Peaceful. The play, **Private Peaceful**, is adapted from the novel by Michael Murpurgo and through reminiscences tells the story of the life of a young WWI soldier, on the last night of his life.

The range of characters are wonderfully portrayed by Francis whose accents and voices are absolutely spot on and consistent which, combined with his different stance and body language, allow the audience to clearly 'see' the person being portrayed.

Time is a recurring motif in the play as Tommo remembers his past life. There is the hero worship of his older brother Charlie at the time who protects him when he is bullied at school. Then the time when they play together with Molly, even skinny dipping in the brook, and swear they will always be together.

But time inevitably moves on, as Tommo reminds us looking at his watch throughout the play, and we then see a pregnant Molly, thrown out by her parents, marrying Charlie. A further turning point comes when Tommo becomes aware of the war and is called a coward by an old woman. He lies about his age, as did so many young men, and joins up with Charlie.

The soundscape of soldier's life; the marching, rats in the trenches, gunfire, and the endless artillery barrages are tremendous and Francis' portrayal of the mental anguish the soldiers must have suffered is absolutely convincing and very moving. The vicious sergeant the brothers had endured in training camp reappears and again singles them out. In yet another pointless attempt to take a few feet on German occupied land, Charlie is wounded and Tommo refuses to obey the order to advance and leave him.

This event echos an earlier time when Charlie carried his wounded captain back to safety and was given his watch. He in turn gives it to Tommo and this is the watch he looks at throughout his final night. Tommo is court martialled and condemned to death for cowardice in the face of the enemy.

This is a Must See performance. Ben Francis is a name we will be seeing in lights in years to come.

Reviewed by **Jan Kershaw**

Disclaimer: Ben Francis is an Arts reviewer for Glam Adelaide

Venue: Bakehouse Theatre

Season: 6,7,12,13,14 April 8pm; 8 April 3pm; 9,10,11 April 10.30am

Tickets: \$28 Conc \$25

Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/book/event?eid=333627&>