

BWW Reviews: THIEF OF TIME Could be One of the Best Uses of Your Time

Reviewed by Christine Pyman, Saturday 24th May 2014

Unseen Theatre Company takes on another Sir **Terry Pratchett** novel for our delight, in this case, the very popular **Thief Of Time**, affectionately known as TOT to Pratchett aficionados.

Anyone familiar with this work, and unfamiliar with Unseen Theatre, will be shaking their heads at this point. TOT is a complex book, even by Pratchett's standards, taking on existential time theory as a plot basic, but Pratchett has never been known to talk down to his audience, rather the opposite in fact, which is why so many fans are on the geekier side of life, mea culpa, too. Unseen Theatre Company also does not talk down to their audience and, under the more than capable direction, adaptation, and producing of Pamela Munt, this play flows, somewhat like Time itself, in an inexorable stream, taking us along with it, submerging us in the characters' drama, and giving us wibbly wobbly, timey wimey hiccups of laughter as we go.

Pamela Munt is complemented by her very talented and dedicated cast and, for this production, believe me, they needed to be.

Thirteen cast members play a total of twenty-six roles, with most of them being major ones, and navigate uncounted numbers of set changes over a total of two hours. The use of multimedia, clever direction, and some on stage set changes, allowed the story to unfold with no sense of disconnectedness.

There were so many excellent performances in this production that it's hard to know where to start, so maybe the beginning is a good place. Melanie Lyons, who used to be and continuing in the theme of this play probably always will be, Melanie Munt, gave us Footnote, in a manner suited to a professional actor of her standing, which is to say consummately professional and engaging, and, as a floating talking head, fitted so admirably into the ethos of the original books.

Phillip Lineton, yet again, has defined a character for me, his high-energy performance as Lu-Tze has ensured that I will no longer be able to read Thief of Time without seeing him as this character. He has managed this with each character I have seen him play, so that my Pratchett reading is littered with visuals of Lineton-like people. I can only assume that he has a large family with a lot of descendants in Ankh Morpork. He brings a manic activity, but also Zen like calm, both at the same time to this role, seemingly paradoxical, but achieved perfectly.

Leighton James played the 'not twins/same person separated at birth' main characters of Jeremy Clockson and Lobsang Ludd, with his Jeremy being particularly

noteworthy. He changed mannerisms and appearance to successfully bring such a difference to each that I, for one, would have thought they were being played by different actors.

Susan Sto-Helit was personified by Amelia Lorien, achieving the right amount of bossiness, class, style and power that Deaths granddaughter obviously has. As a part human/part anthropomorphic deity, she took charge without over-powering, and left the audience wanting to see her in more stories.

Priscilla Thomas's performance as Lady Le Jean was initially chilling, but increasingly spiralled into humorous madness that showed the inhuman qualities of the auditors, and what happens when they step out into Pratchett's Universe.

Nanny Ogg, our favourite good time witch, made some welcome appearances as the midwife who birthed Lobsang/Jeremy, with Michelle Whichello bringing her considerable experience with body language and acting to make these fairly short appearances memorable. We do love a good witch.

Hugh O'Connor returned as DEATH, looming and "doing the VOICE" over everyone, with his not so lovely, but cute sidekick, DEATH of Rats (David Dyte) giving so much meaning to his "squeeks" to give everyone a giggle. O'Connor brings experience to the role of DEATH, and his actions, particularly with the Horsemen of the Apocalypse, brought laughter as well as fright to the audience.

Of course the play wouldn't be complete without an Igor, and a lispng, capering, mad Igor we were given by **Lewis Baker**. Baker also had a role as Pestilence, amusingly and appropriately played in a surgeon's outfit, giving us more thoughts to add to the entirety of the play.

Other Horsemen were Tony Cockington, who bought a milky spin to the idea of apocalypse, Samuel Creighton's wonderfully indulgent, faintly camp Famine, and Daniel McInnes as War, appearing in the form of the best of British mad colonels. Creighton also gave us a madly enthusiastic Qu, which I much preferred to any appearing in the Bond films.

The list of performances wouldn't be complete without a mention of the best scene stealing ever seen, and all done with some outrageous wiggles of her bum. Thank you Pamela Munt. Needless to say, she played roles other than the wife of War, but this was so totally outstanding as to get its own mention.

Stage, lighting, sound, etc, were all handled by only two people, Andrew Zeuner and Stephen Dean, to bring this show together, and together they did a job that would tax half a dozen, admirably.

All together, this was a fun night out, with the audience and cast enjoying it equally.
Go and see it.