



The Baby Farmer, by The Laudanum Project. Picture: Supplied.

Adelaide Fringe review 2017: The Baby Farmer

Richard Evans, The Advertiser
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The Baby Farmer

Theatre ****1/2

Bakehouse Theatre — Studio, until March 11

IT'S a small room, incense heavy, two men and a dozen pulled-apart dolls thrust on spikes at the foot of the stage.

The pianist is a dead ringer for 1970s Sparks keyboardist Ron Mael — expressionless, tiny moustache, weird.

The narrator doesn't proffer his name but could pass for Frankenstein's monster, stitches and scars smothering his whitened, bald head.

It was if Richard III had escaped from the nearby Her Majesty's Theatre and popped in for a particularly manic spell of moonlighting. Only acclaimed actor Lars Eiding (Richard) would have been hard pushed to match this 75 minutes of compelling clarity and delivery by Nick Ravenswood as the narrator.

The storyline was a mush — something about the madness and penury of a late 19th century nurse in London looking after infants whose parents couldn't look after them — and won't draw you back but Ravenswood will, always.

There won't be a more commanding individual performance this Fringe, surely, and while the play is dark and dingy in setting and spirit, it cannot be ignored.

Unsettling and not always likeable, but an unexpected gem.

Richard Evans