

## The Last Continent



**By Terry Pratchett. Directed by Pamela Munt. The Bakehouse Theatre, Adelaide. September 19-October 4, 2014**

Since its formation in 1999, Adelaide's Unseen Theatre Company has staged 25 plays based on the work of beloved fantasy novelist Terry Pratchett. Having attained something of a cult following in the process, Unseen asked their regular patrons to vote on which of their back catalogue was worthy of an encore performance.

The result was *The Last Continent*, and it's not hard to see why this piece has proved one of their more enduringly popular efforts. In this "fish out of water" comedy, a group of stuffy wizards find themselves transported to a fantastical continent that resembles Australia, and the most cowardly of them all is tasked with the quest of ending an eons-long drought – contending with both the harsh elements and a succession of "true blue" Aussie stereotypes along the way. Everything from "Skippy The Bush Kangaroo", to Ned Kelly, "Waltzing Matilda" and the creation of Vegemite get a satirical skewering here.

The narrative is rather meandering, and the second act does feel a bit flabby. But Pratchett's wittily quotable dialogue, Michelle Whichello's strikingly surreal costumes and director Pamela Munt's lively blocking of scenes keeps the proceedings briskly entertaining. Sets (designed by Munt with Andrew Zeuner) are minimal, but effectively otherworldly, aided immensely by the suitably eerie lighting of Stephen Dean .

The cast (most of whom play multiple roles, "Monty Python" style) are consistently solid, but a few players stand out. Hugh O'Connor makes for an amusingly affable Angel Of Death, Samm Blackmore an endearingly ineffectual God, and Paul Messenger is interesting as an oddly pushy Kangaroo. Chris Irving does what he can to inject some nuance into the rather one-note protagonist, and the rest of the ensemble (Harold Roberts, David Dyte, Michelle Whichello, Beverly Koch, Molly Dyte) all bring a fittingly high energy level to these larger than life caricatures, whilst Munt makes for a winningly sardonic narrator.



This production is likely to appeal most to Pratchett's existing fanbase, although adapter Munt provides just enough exposition for the uninitiated to follow the basic storyline and get the jokes, there is still a lot of assumed knowledge with regards to the workings of Pratchett's "Discworld", and some things could be explained a lot better. Hopefully, the next time Unseen adapts one of Pratchett's works to the stage, they will make more of an effort to craft a play that is accessible to people who are totally unfamiliar with the source material.

Still, this is a fun night out, and Pratchett's legions of fans are sure to have a blast with it.

*Benjamin Orchard – Stage Whispers*

Images: top (from left to right) Harold Roberts as Senior Wrangler, Paul Messenger as Archchancellor Rincewind, Hugh O'Connor as Ponder, Michelle Whichello as the Librarian, David Dyte as The Dean, background is Beverley Koch as Mrs. Whitlow & lower Paul Messenger as the Kangaroo God and Chris Irving as Rincewind.

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