

Broadway World Review – Small Gods



Reviewed by Christine Pyman, Saturday 16th May 2015

Fittingly, for the first Unseen Theatre Company production since Sir Terry Pratchett's death, **Small Gods** shows us one of his darker pieces, although served up with his characteristic wit and humour. It makes for some uncomfortable moments of truth.

Unseen Theatre Company takes this on with their usual enthusiasm and energy, resulting in a production that will stay with the audience for a long time, I suspect.

Small Gods opens with an introduction to The Great God, Om, played by Alycia Rabig, who is probably the only actress in history to have to be simultaneously the God of all creation, while manifesting as a tortoise. And she is convincing. At times I found myself watching the tortoise, and not because of the good eating on them.

The story revolves around Om, and the only person with true faith enough to hear the god, the novice, Brutha, (Timothy Tedmanson) and their adventures to create believers and, thereby, return power to Om. Well, that is from Om's point of view, anyway.

From Brutha's, it is a journey from blind acceptance of those he trusts are above him, to self-realisation, via knowledge and truth. Tedmanson had the lion's share of the lines in this play, and carried out his role with a sensitivity that generated audience compassion for his character. Along the way, we get to meet Deacon Vorbis, played with relish and evil delight by Adeodatus McCormack, who showed some of the depths that organised religions have gone to, and the sort of power-hungry men who have been drawn to their respective churches, to make their views the only acceptable version of reality for everyone. In true Pratchett fashion, we find ourselves laughing whilst starting to gasp with horror, both at what we are witnessing and the realisations of the truths behind it all, and horror that we are actually laughing at it.

On the opposite side of the religious discussion, are the Epehians, led by their Tyrant, played by the amazingly and exotically bedecked Sally Peck who, ironically enough, is the embodiment of religious freedom. There are also the local philosophers, led by Didactylos who, with a broad Australian accent, was the personification of Didacticism, to everyone's enjoyment.

Other characters who helped carry the story were the wise and self-effacing monk Lu-Tze, played by the Lu-Tze-like, apart possibly from the self-effacing part, Phillip Lineton, and there is Tony Power in the multiple roles of a memorable Brother Nhumrod, Sergeant Simony, and one of the guards, as well as **David Haller**, as some comic relief in his own right, plus more multiple roles played by Tony Cockington and Aimee Ford, and a cameo by the experienced DEATH, Hugh O'Connor.

Pamela Munt, adapter, director, and producer, also has a stage presence as the footnote, so beloved of Sir Terry, and us all. Unseen Theatre are extremely lucky to have the drive and vision of Pamela Munt, and also the skills and talent of Michelle Whichello, with costuming, and Andrew Zeuner's multiple skills, particularly noticeable with this clever set, designed in collaboration with Pamela Munt, and lighting and sound man, Stephen Dean.

Stage, lighting, sound, and all the rest of the technical needs, were controlled by just two people, Matthew Chapman and Stephen Dean, bringing this show together for us all to enjoy.

This is a different experience from your usual theatre in that the audience feels almost part of the collaboration of magic and enjoyment and, somehow, Unseen Theatre Company manages this small miracle every time. Final words of advice; never upset a tortoise.