



"PRATCHETT'S VIVID CHARACTERS AND WONDERFULLY TONGUE-IN-CHEEK DIALOGUE ARE RIGHT AT HOME IN THIS VIBRANT AND IMAGINATIVE INTERPRETATION"

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Photo: Michael Errey

Terry Pratchett's ***Small Gods*** is a tale bursting at the shell with absurdity, unexpected laughs, and lighthearted satire. It centres on the once-great god Om, who finds herself stuck in the body of a tortoise due to a shortage in belief – the lifeblood of the gods. In fact, Om has only one true believer left: Brutha. It is Brutha's journey that the tale really chronicles, as he travels to far off lands, struggles with the meaning of his own belief, finds himself in the middle of multiple warring factions and spends a lot of time conversing with a very sardonic tortoise.

The novel is definitely one of Pratchett's more difficult to translate onto stage; there is a lot of tortoise and a large part of both the story and humour is provided by narration. Despite this director/producer/actor Pamela Munt has managed to condense the story into a play for the Unseen Theatre Company that hits all the plot points and doesn't lose any of the comedy.

My companion for the night, who was not familiar with the novel, found the initial prologue a bit confusing. Reliance on narration by the added character Footnote was at times heavy handed and occasionally broke the pace of the action. Nonetheless, newcomers to Pratchett's Discworld, after some initial reorientation, should have no trouble falling into the tale of a small tortoise and her apostle Brutha (charmingly played by Timothy Tedmanson).

The other potential staging difficulty – Om herself – proved no obstacle. Having a (human) member of the cast with tortoise in hand representing all the emotion and dialogue of the god was definitely the next best thing to having a real telepathic tortoise. The interesting choice to cast Om as a woman also worked well and added a new layer of satire. Alycia Rabig wonderfully portrayed the comic frustration you would expect from a god with an inferiority complex.

Head Exquisitor Vorbis and associates were given a distinctly Spanish Inquisition vibe. (I was not expecting the Spanish Inquisition)

I was slightly disappointed by the choice to portray Vorbis in an overtly sadistic way. Pratchett takes great pains in the novel to stress that Vorbis is apathetic, or even selfless in the mental and physical correction of his fellow man. But it is difficult to walk the line between droll and clinically dispassionate psychopathy, so I can understand the choice by Adeodatus McCormack to play it as he did. Indeed, the audience took great delight in his ultimate ironic demise.

I found it easy to delight in the productions devoted attention to detail, such as a tortoiseshell patterned floor (the turtle moves!) and a cameo from a wonderfully mellifluous Death.

The Unseen Theatre Company's **Small Gods** is a fitting homage to the late great author himself. Pratchett's vivid characters and wonderfully tongue-in-cheek dialogue are right at home in this vibrant and imaginative interpretation of the Discworld canon.

**CATCH SMALL GODS AT THE BAKEHOUSE THEATRE,
255 ANGAS ST UNTIL 30 MAY. BOOK HERE >>**