

The Baby Farmer



The Laudanum Project. Adelaide Fringe. The Bakehouse Theatre. 6 – 11 March, 2017

The Baby Farmer comes in three formats; a book, illustrations and a play. After looking at the grim sketches by artist Chloe Neath, I had a fair idea that I was going to witness something out of my comfort zone. Sitting in the front row I was met with baby dolls impaled on spikes lining the front of the stage; some missing limbs, heads and other dolls gutted.

A tall imposing man entered through the side door. Pale faced, he sat behind a keyboard; Captain Enoch Malleus (Gareth Skinner) was to provide the soundtrack for the evening. Shortly afterwards, a frail, yet ominous man draped in a dark smock covered with dust made his way to the stage grasping a walking cane; as he turned toward the dim light his eyes cut a daunting gaze across the audience. He was to be our storyteller, Alphonse Cheese-Probert (Nick Ravenswood).

As he began to tell us of the story of Agatha May and her mother Winnifred Alcorn, I was aware of the deathly silence in the theatre. His voice was commanding and intoxicating. His words had a beauty to them, yet they shocked me to the core. A macabre tale filled with terror and disbelief filled the air and although I wanted to dis-engage, I could not look away.

The skill an actor must possess to carry an audience on his own, with only the narrative and the ambience of sound, is extraordinary. I was left numb by the experience.

This is a must see for lovers of theatre and ghostly tales.

Kerry Cooper

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