

BWW Review: THE TRUTH at Bakehouse Theatre



Reviewed by Christine Pyman, Saturday 28th October 2017.

Sir Terry Pratchetts, [The Truth](#), is, like all of his writing, so funny that the viewer, or reader, forgets the depth and darkness of the underlying truth. This story is set in the city of Ankh-Morpork, where William de Worde, played by Hugh O'Connor, finds his stride as a teller of truth and, finally, a purveyor of stories that may or not be truth. When the idea of mass dissemination of information to the population comes to the Discworld, only the Patrician, Lord Vetinari, once more played by Philip Lineton, realises the potential danger, or possible benefits to his rule.

Mixed in with the concept of population gullibility and manipulation, is the story of the political machinations of special interest groups, and their employment of the epitome of amoral lawyers, Mr. Slant (Pamela Munt), and subsequent outsourcing to hired criminals, Mr. Pin and Mr. Tulip, played by Nick Andrews and Paul Messenger, respectively. This leads into a bit of a whodunit scenario, allowing the glory of the Ankh-Morpork Watch to add to the mayhem.

This adaptation, by Stephen Briggs, directed by Pamela Munt, showcased perfectly the talents of the Unseen Theatre actors and stage management. Munt, herself, is perfect as the literally dry as death zombie lawyer, Mr. Slant. From her rolling, dry, crackling voice, to her green skin, she shows the deviousness of the Law, as we all suspect it of actually being.

O'Connor's, de Worde, encapsulates the struggles of a wealthy and well brought up young man finding his way, and passion, in the world, against the traditional and very differing views of his family. As someone who is on stage for the majority of the time, he managed to completely have the audience's sympathy for his character. When there was the slightest hint of a budding romance between him and the equally naïve, and not quite as well born reporter, Sacharissa Cripslock, beautifully brought to life by Natalie Haigh, there was a collective intake of breath by the audience at an untimely interruption, and we can all imagine continued life for these characters.

The humour of this story is reliant on many things, and this cast got all of them spot on, from absolute exact timing, intonation, stage direction to something that cannot be pinned down, but comes down to projection of energy of loveable, real, characters. I think that simply calling them good actors doesn't quite cover it. Tight direction, effective set design, and very good lighting and sound design are all crucial, and when good are largely unnoticed, and these were achieved well, thanks to Pamela Munt, Andrew Zeuner, Stephen Dean and Eleanor Adams.

All of the performances were excellent, but some audience favourites were definitely the frighteningly scary but still loveable bad boys, Nick Andrews and Paul Messenger, playing the hired criminals, Mr. Pin and Mr. Tulip. These two seemed to fit effortlessly into the roles, with the modern suits adding to the threatening demeanour, giving them the well-dressed thug look. Mr. Tulip's unexpectedly verbose knowledge of art history during a kidnap scene was my personal favourite, portrayed with perfect panache by Messenger.

Another audience favourite stand-out performance was of the vampire photographer, Otto Chriek, played by the talented Danny Sag, who also was responsible for the very clever programme which I predict will be kept as a souvenir by many. Sag has great comedic timing and a good control of body language needed for a role that provides crucial elements to the play.

Aimee Ford's, Gaspode, the talking dog, proves once again that her place is on the stage, not behind the scenes, which is how her involvement started with Unseen Theatre. Gaspode not only introduces the play, but also has an important part to play in the reference to popular culture towards the end of the story. I'll say no more, as the surprise would be spoiled.

Altogether, the hard work that Unseen puts into their plays makes The Truth an excellent fun evening out. I would highly recommend seeing this play to anyone and, for Pratchett fans, I would say that you cannot miss it.

Unseen Theatre Company just keeps on getting better, with its latest offering, The Truth, being the best yet.

Christine Pyman – Broadway World