

[ADELAIDE FRINGE, REVIEW](#)

THE BALLAD OF MULAN

MARCH 8,
2020 BY [TULPAMAGAZINE](#)



A gritty, grown-up retelling of the original tale, *The Ballad of Mulan* follows alternate timelines that see a battle hardened Mulan look back over a decade of war and sacrifice on the eve of her final battle. Delving deep into the narrative's inherent questions of gender, war and identity, this one-woman show is a homage to the courage and fortitude of a well-known icon, popularised in the West through Disney's animated film.

The sparse set design illustrates Mulan's isolation, both as a woman hidden in a male dominated world, and as a person who is set to transition to the next stage of her life and feels the unease and trepidation that come with the prospect of such change. Mulan's isolation is also evident in the play's use of reflective narration: At one point the character even acknowledges that she is talking to herself.

Michelle Yim is engaging as Mulan, and though some aspects of the hour-long performance's delivery might benefit from a little refinement, Yim's interpretation and portrayal of both the experienced general and the optimistic foot soldier is confident and dynamic.

The show's writing is accomplished, offering a fresh but pragmatic examination of Mulan's past motivations and future aspirations, with the dual timelines striking a perfect harmony between the terror and violence of battle, and the distraction and reflection that come in the moments before. Clever lighting and sound design also serve to emphasise this juxtaposition.

At its core, *The Ballad of Mulan* is a powerful exploration of gender, war, and identity, as relevant and timely today as ever. Expect a little humour, a lot of heart and a refreshing focus on the darker aspects of a familiar tale.

4/5 stars

Words by Rachael Stapleton

The Ballad of Mulan is playing until March 12 at the Bakehouse Theatre