



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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DOGFALL

TheimaGen

The Bakehouse Theatre

Until 17 November 2007

Review by Stephen Davenport

"War is like love, it finds a way."

"Dogfall" is a complex anti-war marathon that asks difficult questions and resists comfortable answers. An intelligent, finely tuned, non-stop chill ride, there is an odd magic and power about this production. It's so expertly crafted, the cast so powerful, and the performance so remarkable, that "Dogfall" exceeds all expectations. This uncompromising drama makes a forlorn statement of war from fighting in WW1 trenches, to Bosnia, Rwanda and beyond, stressing the inanity of warfare for all sides. An ambitious story of tremendous sweep and scope, this brilliant play lays bare the wretched idiocy at the heart of war. Overall, "Dogfall" is disturbing and morbidly funny.

All's not quiet on the western front. It's literally raining bombs, cats and dogs and various other animals. Jack is a medic and Will a gung-ho soldier who reaches out to the audience, grabs it by the neck and squeezes. They're fighting 'the war to end all wars', except it's only the beginning. The same two characters are joined by semi-pacifist Alousha in a series of deftly turned vignettes showing battles in Nanking, Vietnam, London and more. It's a multi-layered, multi-national epic that delivers on every count, as well as raising issues of ethics, which are at the play's heart.

The set is simple but effective with its sandbags, stretchers, tins of peas and other military accoutrements remaining the same throughout nearly 60 years of conflict. The lighting and projections are subtle and the acting is excellent. The three actors are ideal for this production. But "Dogfall" is also an exciting, sharp, impeccably delivered and gripping play, written with controlled power and sustained insight.

Masterfully helmed by Justin McGuiness and superbly written by Caleb Lewis, this play has complex themes, sympathetic characters expertly acted, and an absurd plot that avoids the traditional body count by concentrating on falling dogs. This makes for a tense and absolutely riveting play about the ironies of war and the deadly games soldiers play.