



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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THE LAST CONTINENT

Unseen Theatre Company

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 24 Oct 2009

Review by Jamie Wright

'The Last Continent' is the theatrical adaptation of the novel of the same name, one of the series of Discworld novels by Terry Pratchett. Numerous adaptations of the stories have been staged around the globe; Unseen Theatre Company have produced 18 over the last nine years.

However, since the stories are set in a fantasy universe and frequently feature an assortment of non-human characters, acts of magic and other difficult-to-recreate-on-stage situations, the play adaptations are often an uphill battle for a production to 'work' as effective theatre. Unfortunately, this particular production – for the most part - emerges from the battle rather the worse for wear.

Pamela Munt, directing from her own adaptation, has the cast play mostly for laughs – and the occasional success in this regard is the production's saving grace; the story itself is almost incomprehensible; most of the time it seemed more like a series of short comic vignettes tied together by a loose central theme (eccentric, socially inept wizards transported via magic from their quasi-English world to Australia) than a cohesive narrative.

Despite the disjointed feel, the enthusiastic cast – almost all playing multiple roles - work hard throughout; standouts include Alastair Preece, who throws himself (literally) into the role of destiny's whipping boy, Rincewind – though the shrill voice does start to grate after a while. Elliott Howard demonstrates a good grasp of physical acting and voice to create his four distinct characters. Hugh O'Connor, while lethargic as a bartending crocodile, is vocally spot-on as the dry-humoured DEATH. Marlon Dance-Hooi is a bundle of energy in each of his roles, particularly Mad Max, the crossbow-wielding dwarf.

Set was minimal and appropriate for some of the scenes; however, because of the back and forth nature of the story, it was unhelpful for others. Costuming was good for the most part, including the wizards and the numerous Australian stereotype characters – but the ineffective and sloppy-looking wire-headed animal character costumes were bizarre and distracting. Props were also a mix of good and bad – the obvious toy guns made into crossbows being an example of the latter. Lighting helped delineate space on the stage but was used for little else.

As an evening of comedy, featuring Pratchett's much-loved wizard characters (though some, such as The Bursar and The Librarian, are given precious little stage time) and humorous social commentary (plus a light-hearted mocking of many Australian icons) it passes - albeit only barely. But for those unfamiliar with his work – and particularly those who haven't read the novel recently enough to already know the plot – the experience is one which will most likely leave them wondering what's happening and why.