



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

Adelaide Repertory Theatre

Arts Theatre

Until 22 April 2017

Review by Brian Godfrey

When one goes to see an amateur production and walks into the theatre's auditorium to discover the curtain up displaying a set and a lighting effect comparable to some found on Broadway or London's West End, one knows that this particular production promises 'greatness'.

The production in question is the Adelaide Rep's incredibly atmospheric production of "The Diary Of Anne Frank". The play, based on the true story of eight people of the Jewish faith who managed to hide from the Germans in the loft of an Amsterdam building from 1942 to 1944, requires the audience to understand what conditions were like during that harrowing time.

Ole Weibkin's multi-layered, maze-like set is cramped, claustrophobic in areas, and absolutely brilliant. The set even cleverly utilizes the Arts Theatre's orchestra pit to effective measure.

Lighting Designer Richard Parkhill always provides excellent designs, but seems to have excelled himself this time – especially with the initial effect of a central dust-filled central spot.

Geoff Brittain's direction is realistic in style and, along with the excellent cast, highlights the character of the roles, rather than deliver them as caricatures. He brings out not only the fear and drama of the piece, but manages to deliver some wonderful, unexpected humour. Two scenes in Act Two in particular show Brittain's skill in presenting an audience with beautiful 'pictures'. Both take place in the utmost attic of the set and both involve great acting from Henny Walters as Anne and Ronan Banks as Peter Van Daan – one scene is evocatively sweet and poignant, while the other is marvelously angry.

The only niggle that this reviewer has is with Brittain's directorial decision to have the adults speak with quite authentic accents, whilst the younger cast members all speak with nicely pronounced English accents – especially Walters, who sounds like she may have gone to Roedean.

As mentioned earlier, the entire cast (Henny Walters, Tim Williams, Nicole Rutty, Genevieve Venning, Tim Taylor, Therese Hornby, Ronan Banks, Chris Leech, Stuart Pearce and Esther Michelsen) are all excellent. This is ensemble acting at its finest and so promising to see such maturity and skill in the younger cast members in particular.

With world affairs as they are at the moment, this play is still relevant (unfortunately) today and a haunting reminder of persecution. However, this production is not depressing – it is beautiful, entertaining and will leave you with a guaranteed lump in the throat.