



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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PRIVATE PEACEFUL

Promise Adelaide

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 6 May 2017

Review by Brian Godfrey

There are always atrocities associated with any war. But World War I saw them practiced on our side as well as the enemy's. 306 British and Commonwealth soldiers were executed for such things as cowardice and desertion – four of them were only 17.

Playwright Simon Reade's stage adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's award winning novel, "Private Peaceful" tells the story of 17 year old Private Thomas 'Tommo' Peaceful who is sentenced to be shot at dawn for supposed cowardice. On the night leading up to his execution, Tommo tells us of his life starting with his first day of school, growing up in rural Devon and family life, enlisting and the horrors and events leading up to his last moments on earth.

Reade's script is extremely well written, with plenty of humour mixed nicely with drama, emotion and poignancy. It deserves any production to treat it with respect. Director Rob Croser and actor Ben Francis do so much more with it. This is an absolutely marvellous, flawless production.

Croser ensures that Francis makes every word and gesture count, and he does. At only 17 himself, Francis gives a faultless and magnificent performance. He is spectacular, playing all the characters involved to a tee. His various accents are spot-on and he impresses with how the timbre and tone of his voice changes effortlessly to portray children, women (young and old), country lads and educated officers.

Croser's direction keeps Francis moving the whole 80 minutes of the show, and he does it with such beautifully flowing physicality.

Francis is maturing quickly as an all-round performer. He has proven time and again that he can sing and dance well, but "Private Peaceful" showcases his acting talent to the extreme, proving him not only more than worthy of the opening night standing ovation that he received, but showing that he is a young man to watch out for.

There is only one thing wrong with this production – the season was far too short. If it ever returns, rush to see it.