



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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JERUSALEM

University of Adelaide Theatre Guild

Little Theatre

Until 17 August 2019

Review by Talia Gaertner-Jones

Jez Butterworth's play "Jerusalem" premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 2009 and, following an excellent response, toured the West End, Broadway and back again. Butterworth has captured England's 'Englishness' as some might say, and woven enchanted tales of folklore in amongst the harsh reality of drugs, alcohol and gang violence.

Director Nick Fagan talks about his love for this play ever since picking up a copy and reading it eight years ago and this adoration and understanding is certainly evident in every aspect of the production. The set in the Little Theatre, even though scattered with litter, broken furniture and empty bottles was still inviting and complemented the characters in the play.

Set against the backdrop of William Blake's poem 'Jerusalem', beautifully sung by Eloise Quinn Valentine, we meet Johnny 'Rooster' Byron, who has lived an extraordinary life. He is a man who has met a giant that built Stonehenge, has pure gypsy blood and could make any woman swoon. Sadly though, despite his larger than life history, Rooster is now about to get evicted from his caravan in the woods, is frequently found passed out drunk and is selling drugs to youths. It is Brant Eustice who plays Rooster and takes us on this journey from a comical beginning to a quick demise.

Watching Eustice and how he portrays the character of Rooster is fascinating: he draws you in, like he does the rest of the characters on stage. You are aware that Rooster is not an honest man, yet, watching him and watching the audience sympathise with him was a tribute to Eustice's connection to the role. He takes you on a rollercoaster ride of emotion in the final act, when more of his true character is revealed.

Rooster is supported by his band of misfits, Ginger (Robert Bell), The Professor (Adrian Barnes), Lee (Benjamin Quirk), Davey (Oliver Reschke), Pea (Ashley Penny), Tanya (Harper Robb) and Wesley (Peter Davies) who all bring their unique characters to life. It is Bell, though, as Ginger – Rooster's closest companion – who helps support Rooster's character. Ginger has perhaps more feelings than the rest of the misfits and more wits about him, and Bell's performance alongside Eustice is that of a loyal friend.

Thank you Nick Fagan and University of Adelaide Theatre Guild for the local premiere of "Jerusalem"; it is great to see this play in all its glory. I will warn prospective audience members that the performance does go for three hours – however, do not let this deter you. Once you meet Rooster, you will get drawn in to his story and time will fly by.