

THE REVIEWERS CLUB

Theatre Review

Event: Goucher's War

Venue: Salisbury Arts Centre

Date: 4 April 2011

Reviewer: Hannah Speed



I found myself immersed into a bizarre wartime world whilst watching Goucher's War. Theatre Alibi took the audience from small-talk over stilton to a mischievous pig called Hiawyn parachuting in on the enemy front-line. The play opened my eyes to the horrors of war and an artist's responsibility for the consequences of a creation.

As I entered the main space the first thing that struck me was the Heath Robinson-style set, in the centre was a large circular screen-like contraption, with shelves and platforms coming off the side, cluttering around this centre piece was an array of bicycle wheels, teapots, chairs and a charming mini Eiffel-tower.

Goucher's War starts with a ukulele accompanied wartime song, and as we go through the narration we meet Revered Goucher (Michael Wagg) who writes the popular children's books featuring Hiawyn, a pig with a particularly mischievous habit. After living a quiet life in the country tending to the parish and writing children's books, Goucher is sucked into wartime Special Operation's.

Goucher then conjures up and narrates animations, projected onto the circular screen, in which Hiawyn baffles Nazis with itching powder in undergarments, exploding wine bottles and special edition cigarettes, featuring an incendiary bomb. Once what was a delightful story about a troublesome pig is now transformed into a very-real scenario of espionage and sabotage.

As the eccentric Goucher starts to lose his grip on reality, Hiawyn's stories become darker and more sinister. It's not long before the situation turns nightmarish, and as Goucher confronts his fears and the destructive reality of his ideas it makes the easy comedy of Daniel Jamieson's writing gives way to bigger questions and uncertainty about morals. Strange things occur in times of crisis and a war is waging in Goucher's mind.

Essential to the storytelling of this tale it musician Finn Beames, his use of keyboard, ukulele, accordion and theremin beautifully bring the animations featuring Hiawyn to life. With a cast of only three, the whole play is brilliantly executed, the acting ability of Jordan Wythe especially amazed me as she takes on three characters, slipping easily between them by putting on an accessory, changing her stance and tone of voice.

Goucher's War was an inspiring and thought-provoking eighty minutes of theatrical ingenuity. If you want to catch this gem of a performance head on down to Bromwich, where it will be staged at The Public West Bromwich on the 8th April or find it at Studio One Dartington on April 19th.

*The Young Reviewers Club is run by The Unit,
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*For more information or to book our young
reviewers and photographers please get in touch*

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