

Wyrd Sisters



By Terry Pratchett, adapted by Stephen Briggs. Unseen Theatre Company. Bakehouse Theatre. November 17th-27th, 2021

Sir Terry Pratchett, satirist and author of fantasy novels, especially comical works, is best known for his *Discworld* series of 41 novels. The books frequently parody or take inspiration from classic works, usually fantasy or science fiction, and mythology, folklore and fairy tales. Famously, he often used them for satirical parallels with cultural, political and scientific issues. He said, "Fantasy isn't just about wizards and silly wands. It's about seeing the world from new directions."



Stephen Dean Photography

There is no doubt that Unseen Theatre Company are Pratchett fans, having a well-established history of presenting his work. Like the worldwide dedicated conventions celebrating *Discworld*, on opening night, the theatre was packed with fans who may well already be signed up to the Australian 2022 *Discworld* Convention, all understanding the 'in' jokes, howling enthusiastically at the multi-layered plot twists, jokes, double entendres and puns.

Adapted by Stephen Briggs, this play is an abridged version of the stage adaptation of late novelist Pratchett's sixth *Discworld* book and is in itself a parody of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Confused? Don't worry; all the tropes are there in this comedy/drama with the requisite three witches, and a murdered king who becomes a somewhat reluctant chain rattling ghost. Add to this an ambitious Duchess Felmet, suitably horrible, mean and plotting, played by Aimee Ford, and a child/man, Tomjon, played with appropriate confusion by Chris Irving who has a destiny, and possibly a crown.

The coven of three witches is key to linking and creating this whole story and the casting is well done. Pamela Munt as Granny Weatherwax is suitably disapproving, casting a gimlet eye over all proceedings, Natalie Haigh as Nanny Ogg brings warmth and much enjoyed comedy timing and Alycia Rabig is sparkling as the winsome, innocent, trainee ingénue witch who, somewhat predictably, has to fall in love with an unlikely, love-struck Danny Sag, resplendent as The Fool in an authentic Jester's costume.

innocent, trainee ingénue witch who, somewhat predictably, has to fall in love with an unlikely, love-struck Danny Sag, resplendent as The Fool in an authentic Jester's costume.



The double meanings abound, aided by introducing a theatre company into the plot, allowing plots, characters and side-tracks to double up. Vocally, Hugh O'Connor as the real Death (I never thought I would say this), is vocally wonderful and plants comedy lines with impressive aplomb. Frequently, the medieval world is invaded by modernity, and notable was the wit introduced with The Fool as an unabashed 'spin-doctor'. Philip Lineton as the Chamberlain and Hwel the theatre company director, brings real acting gravitas to each role, anchoring each scene that he is in.

The sets by Andrew Zeuner are very simple and props by Kristy Simons are often very convincing, particularly the beautiful swords.

Stephen Dean is a master of light and sound and whilst the lights aid the story, the operation of sound effects are often distractingly abruptly stopped. Apt music is used to help bridge what are sometimes quite lengthy scene changes.

Most of the costumes by Elyssiah Green, particularly for lead roles, add significantly to the story. With 16 players in this troupe, and the twists and turns in the story, I particularly appreciated

Danny Sag's detailed and informative programme. It allowed me to readily follow the characters, and story.

It is likely that the play will continue to 'settle in'. On Opening Night, the two act, 100 minute play, possibly due to direction, had many inconsistencies. The acting style, accents and cohesiveness was yet to develop across the company and despite The Bakehouse being a smaller theatre, many of the actors, leads included, lapsed into a conversational style and the volume needed, was lost.



The story is a rollicking medieval romp. Pratchett's unchallenged talent as a master wordsmith is on show in *Wyrd Sisters*, presented by this company of passionate players.

For those who loved Christmas pantos, this is not quite that, but it is a clever adult version of fun and pageantry that is perfect for a night out celebrating imagination, fantasy and fun.

Jude Hines – Stage Whispers

Photographer: Stephen Dean