

# **DR FAUSTUS - WITH A TWIST YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!**

5:00pm Wednesday 7th November 2012

Puppetry is for kids' parties and not the telling of classic tales with strong moral messages. At least that's what I thought, until Scene Productions put me right. At school, I found out there were spare tickets to go to see Dr Faustus in a local drama centre and I thought to myself, "I might as well!" Dr Faustus is a story I know well and I thought surely I can't miss out – after all, how could I pass on watching a man sell his soul to the devil? All I knew was that there was a big twist to this classic story, but I had no idea it would have stunning puppetry, live illusions and trickery that would conjure up a world in itself.

Upon arrival, even before the performance started, it felt as though you entered a mysterious world. At the door, you were greeted by an actor who pulled you into a macabre atmosphere. As you sat down you could see that this wasn't your everyday performance. Everyone was excited to see this adaptation of Dr Faustus, with the thought of it being something out of the ordinary lingering in our minds.

As the story unfolded, despite the fact you could see one of the cast members holding the puppet, you were instantly engaged – well, you had to be due to the fast paced nature of the performance. As the cast themselves said "having 3 members in the cast meant we all had to play multiple roles". But regardless of this, the speed of the story was faultless as it made the performance polished and smooth, in which the actors worked so well with each other. The highlight had to be the clever use of boards to indicate the audience how to react to their acting. The boards had the words "gasp" and "clap" on either side, which helped to bring in an aspect of theatricality to it as well as engaging the audience into playing a part of the play whilst they were enjoying the humorous side of this dark story.

As well as this, the technical side to the act really helped to give it that extra something that is often lacking in various performances. The use of puppets, props and even their own body parts added to the piece greatly. Dr Faustus himself, the protagonist of the story, was a puppet and despite his small size, the placement of the setting and everything was ingeniously crafted to focus the attention directly onto him. They used, magic tricks, if you must, to help the audience visualise Hell and almost trick us into believing that what we are witnessing is real. They use of lights and sounds created an outer world experience in which you begin to sense a legitimate feeling that something might just creep up behind you.

The cast said that they "wanted to appeal to a wider audience and bring in an aspect of the theatre" to this performance. Most of the Dr Faustus renditions are dark and twisted which

they also wanted to put into their show, but they wanted to have some humour and theatricality to make it stand out too. This tale is used as a piece of GCSE coursework and reviewed at AS level in my school in which the students have to act out part of the story. Chiraag Shah, a student studying AS Drama, said that “the play was a stunning example of the qualities of fringe theatre.” Having seen the different adaptations of Dr Faustus was interesting for the students as they enjoyed watching how different people approached the story.

Dr Faustus is a classic tale that will never grow old and by having people come up with different renditions is the reason why drama should be appreciated more. Nothing is ever just black and white, or in this case, dark and dull as it is the way you interpret something that makes your experience more enjoyable. All you have to do is find something you enjoy and do it passionately – which is exactly what the cast at Scene Productions did when they decided to inventively amalgamate the traditional tale of Dr Faustus with puppetry. Who knows what they will come up with next?

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