

Review of *Silas Marner*



"Strong, vivid and emotional storytelling"

by [Jill Lawrie](#) for remotegoat on 27/09/19

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To celebrate the bicentenary year of renowned novelist George Eliot, Conn Artists Theatre Company are presenting Geoffrey Beevers' stage adaption of the epic novel *Silas Marner* - the weaver of Raveloe. This relatively new professional not-for-profit theatre company is based in Worthing with the intention of providing opportunities for local artists to champion innovative and inspiring live drama both in Worthing and beyond.

This classic novel with its redemptive and heart-warming message is set at the start of the 19th century. Wrongfully condemned linen weaver Silas Marner has become an embittered recluse. He was stitched up and accused of stealing church funds and then later had his own gold coins stolen from him. But one night a young, abandoned orphan wanders into his house and caring for this child Eppie and the love and friendship that develops between them totally changes his life. When a local landowner attempts to fight for his paternal rights to the golden-haired teenager, she cannot be persuaded and loyally remains with Silas forsaking riches and privilege and in so doing she integrates Silas back into the religious community.

Nick Young, a former Artistic Director for the Connaught Theatre, once more directs and using simple staging, subtle lighting effects and puppetry this story of uncertainty, betrayal and forgiveness is brought to life.

Ross Muir, founder member of this theatre company, heads the cast as the lonely miser Silas Marner. He gives an astutely observed performance as the rejected fiancée, life in solitude and despair then ultimately flourishing as Eppie's adored father figure, living a life rich in love and affection. There is good support from the ensemble cast who take on multi roles throughout with Evangeline Duncan excelling in particular as the foundling, initially being the voice of the puppet until her character grows up. Peter McCrohon, amongst his various characters includes an amusing portrayal of the equine Wildfire as well as playing the brooding Godfrey. Charismatic Jake Snowdon impresses as musician, dancer, Dunsey, Aaron and some minor parts too.

After a slow start there is plenty of enjoyment to be had from the complex set of emotions in this tale, that I read as a school book many years ago and in fact is still a set text now. An impressive and well supported opening night of this 15 venue tour.