

Review: Silas Marner, Connaught Theatre, Worthing, Friday 27th September



Following their highly successful production of Belloc's Four Men, Conn Artists returned to the Connaught with Geoffrey Beevers' inventive stage adaptation of George Eliot's epic Victorian novel.

It tells of a poor weaver, wrongfully outcast from society, who becomes a miserly recluse until he is forced to take in a young orphan girl. Their mutual friendship provides love and joy leading to Marner's redemption.

Beevers' adaptation turns the novel into a riveting example of ensemble theatre at its very best. The story, acted out in short scenes, had the cast addressing the audience with linking narrative that moved the story on. It also established the passing of time and changes of location.

Experienced direction from Nick Young allowed the tale to unfold at a swift pace, extracting from his cast some memorable performances. He managed to lighten the melodrama with moments of humour using puppetry, song and dance.

Ross Muir played Marner with the other 26 parts shared by six actors. The role switching was seamless.

Muir, in the title role, gave a magnificently nuanced performance, moving through a range of emotions culminating in a thundering rage when Eppie, the child that he raised, is to be taken from him. His subsidence into tears, when she elects to stay with him, was most moving.

Evangeline Duncan, the adult Eppie, delighted in her courtship scene and was most passionate in her loyalty to Marner. Equally impressive were Alexandra Parker as the kindly Dolly Winthrop, David Stephens as the Squire, Peter McCrohon as Godfrey and Rachel Waters, his wife Nancy.

In addition to his others parts Jake Snowdon also provided musical accompaniment for the production.

Barrie Jerram

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