

Silas Marner review at Connaught Theatre, Worthing – ‘dedicated and at times laborious storytelling’



Ross Muir and Evangeline Duncan in *Silas Marner* at the Connaught Theatre. Photo: Christopher Phillips

- [Reviews](#)
- [Theatre](#)

by [Bella Todd](#) - Sep 30, 2019 The Stage

Geoffrey Beevers has adapted several George Eliot novels for the stage, including an ambitious *Middlemarch* Trilogy for the Orange Tree in 2013. First produced there in 1998, his *Silas Marner* gets a faithful revival here courtesy of talented Worthing company Conn Artists, which was founded five years ago out of a desire to “keep regional theatre alive and burning bright”.

Eliot’s humanist tale of redemption revolves around a reclusive weaver who takes in an orphaned girl. But much else happens besides. Beevers’ adaptation is a piece of dedicated and at times laborious storytelling, just about kept on its toes by lively performances and elements of physical theatre.

Members of the seven-person cast don wicker horse heads and leap over inn benches for the hunting race, and pivot on the spot to suggest a town disorientated by industrialisation. Often they step out of character to pick up the thread of Eliot’s compassionate yet sharply perceptive narration. The child, Eppie, is represented by a large cloth doll, manipulated by the actor who will play her as an adult. It’s a surprisingly moving device, sold to the audience in the tenderness with which Silas removes the doll’s shoes and turns her cloth toes to the fire.

Preoccupied with its narrative task, the adaptation feels slow and lacking in tension, its theatrical ingenuity confined to set-pieces. Ross Muir’s rare and subtle stage presence means that it is the still and mostly silent Silas, grey and hunched and squinting at his loom, who lights Nick Young’s production from within.

Verdict

Talented company revive physical theatre-informed adaptation of George Eliot classic

