



L'ENFANT QUI... - ★★★★★

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BY STEVEN FRASER

Jephan de Villiers may not be a familiar name to most, but after watching L'Enfant Qui it can definitely be said he is an interesting character. Villiers was a French artist and sculptor and the inspiration behind this circus/puppetry performance.

The show does not follow a traditional narrative; instead it can be regarded as a series of abstract physical movements and visual images that present the tormented childhood that Villiers suffered. The child is represented as a curious and inquisitive puppet who interacts with the audience and is tormented throughout the show. His tormentors are three performers who use physical theatre, acrobatics and grotesque face masks (inspired by the sculptor's work) to develop the obscure and dark fantasy world that the young boy inhabits.

The show begins with one of the acrobatic performers wielding a large axe. This eventually crashes down on a block of wood with an almighty force and is the unnerving signal for the wooden puppet to timidly enter the performance space.

The puppet itself is controlled by Morganne Aimerie Robin who brings the young boy to life, emphasising his playful and childlike nature. He interacts with the audience by making eye contact and by stealing one audience member's glasses. This upbeat tone is soon diminished as the show develops into a circus act where the performers hound the seemingly innocent boy.

Located in a circus tent next to the Institut Français d'Ecosse, the setting of L'Enfant Qui is very much part of the performance. The interior of the tent is dimly lit, the floor of the performance space is covered in dirt and dust and there is a musty smell and earthy feel to this room. All this adds to the tension and dark overtones of the performance and indicates to the audience that something dark and mysterious could happen at any point. The empathy we have for this little puppet child is also greatly heightened by this setting.

The live soundtrack is provided by cellist Florence Sauveur. The music is understated and melancholic and brilliantly adds to the dark images on stage.

L'Enfant Qui is an engaging and interesting show. If you are intrigued by outsider art, puppetry and abstract storytelling, then you will definitely find the plight of L'Enfant Qui a curious one.