

VICTORIA WYATT

MONDAY 5 OCTOBER, 2015

The themes in this story resonate with all ages, making this a joy for both adults and children.



*Rachel Arianne Ogles as Fox; Photo Simon Pynt.*

Should you happen to live in WA and have children over the age of 6, the latest production (World premiere) by Australia's leading puppet company, Spare Parts Theatre Company, is a perfect way to stimulate your children's imagination. *Fox* is a dramatic story about an unlikely friendship between characters Dog and Magpie, and how sneaky Fox affects their bond.

This classic Australian tale of friendship and betrayal has been adapted from the much loved storybook by Margaret Wild and stunningly illustrated by children's favourite, Ron Brooks. It brings the adventure to life through the power of dance and costume, underscored by an eerily magical soundtrack and simple yet powerfully effective lighting. The audience travels easily across scorched scrubland, ochre deserts, running streams and into the depths of the caves where the animals seek shelter. Although the visuals are quite simple, the fusion of all these elements work beautifully.

*Fox* is a story that has received worldwide acclaim and won numerous awards. The creators of the book version are two of Australia's most talented storytellers, so translating it into a live show was a work of love for co-creators Michael Barlow (Director), Noriko Nishimoto (Creative Consultant) and Jacob Lehrer (Choreographer). Their combined aim was to 'produce a work that audiences will find powerful and inspire profound conversations well after you leave the theatre.'

Narration is sparse as the messages contained require no superfluous language, which focuses audiences attention on the interaction between the ensemble, which is extremely persuasive.

The dancers are phenomenal and the three characters, Dog, Fox and Magpie are skilfully brought to life. The production marks acclaimed dancer, Rachel Arianne Ogles, debut with the company. Ogles depicts the wiley Fox with a steely precision of movement. Returning cast member Jessica Lewis (Magpie) easily makes us fall in love with Magpie and empathise with her life struggles. She brings the character to life with every tiny move of her hands, feet and face. Immanuel Dado performs an extraordinary caricature of Dog, an animal that draws the audience further into this world with every ear scratch.

The themes in this story resonate with all ages, making this a joy for both the adults and the children, although I would recommend *Fox* for audiences between 7-13, as some of the imagery and even the musical palette may be quite scary a younger audience. Faith, trust, friendship, betrayal, nostalgia, belonging, temptation and courage are explored in this enveloping tale.

Spare Parts' mission is to connect audiences across the generations, and *Fox* successfully fulfils that and more with this compelling modern classic.