
INTERESTING TIMES

Unseen Theatre Company

Bakehouse Theatre

Until 2 April 2004

Review by Simon Slade

For those left who do not know, Terry Pratchett is the multimillion-selling author of the Discworld series of books that, if it weren't for J.K. Rowling would be the world's biggest-selling fantasy books.

His books have been translated into more than 30 languages. Terry Pratchett has fans throughout the world, and a number of his books have been adapted for the stage by Stephen Briggs

This popularity creates a dilemma for those adapting and performing Pratchett's works, as there will be a proportion of the audience who know the book almost word for word, and others who do not. This adaptation is better than some, as it manages to make the plot and characters reasonably clear, without bogging down in explanations.

The two stars of the show without doubt were Steve Parker playing Cohen the Barbarian, and Chris Irving as the hapless wizard, Rincewind. For both actors, their comic timing, and use of comic facial expressions, were highlights. They also both demonstrate the importance of good casting, as they fit their roles so well physically.

This attention to casting and direction carries over to the ensemble. Ronald Densley and Mark Drury, as the two guards, have been cast and directed with their physical differences in mind. As a result, some of their scenes are hilarious.

Director, Pamela Munt, also appears on stage, and her portrayal of Commissioner Kee is very funny.

Not all cast members are as strong, and the Red Army needs a little work. That said, Unseen is giving opportunities for younger actors, and they are all working hard. They will improve with every production.

Multiple levels are used to good effect on the small Bakehouse stage, and Munt's blocking has taken into account the difficult entrances involving not only numerous cast members, but also a wheelchair and a cannon!

The sets were simple and effective, with the exception of a noisy curtain with a tendency to snag. The lighting effects were well done, although the focus was not as tight as it needs to be on a set that is creating distinct areas. The choice of music suited the show well.

Pratchett's "Interesting Times" is very funny and appeals to those who are Pratchett fans, but also those who are unfamiliar with his work.

Unseen's production is fun and enjoyable.