

Original source taken from
<https://bakchormeeboy.com/2016/10/14/review-starring-hitler-as-jekyll-and-hyde-by-the-finger-players-131016/>

[Bakchormeeboy](#)

ARTS REVIEW SINGAPORE SINGAPORE ARTS, THEATRE. THEATRE



Review: Starring Hitler as Jekyll and Hyde by The Finger Players [13/10/16]



BY BAKCHORMEEBOY

OCTOBER 14, 2016

🗨️ COMMENTS 0





I'm still reeling from being indirectly admonished by Hitler, who labelled us critics the 'worst of the worst' and offered his 'professional opinion' of sticking our own opinions back up our arses. Nevertheless, I shall do what I do. The Finger Players are known for their authentic style of storytelling, and coupled with the sublime performance of a star-studded cast in their latest production, *Starring Hitler As Jekyll and Hyde* is bound to rapture the audience from the outset. Catapulted by its undeniable production quality, the show creates a vivid reimagining of German history.



The play starts off simply enough, putting us in right in the fray with an accused Eva Braun (Edith Podesta) imploring that we listen to her alternative take on Hitler's role in the Holocaust. Her story begins with an enactment of Jekyll's rejection from art school, an event that is historically paralleled with Hitler's own life story. This scene was told behind a white screen, where the cast became living *wayang kulit* shadow puppets, directing the audience's attention and visually playing with power dynamics by shifting their sizes and positions. Jekyll, in particular, was clearly diminished compared to Eva, the art school mistress, and his unfeeling critics. The use of this wayang-style presentation recurred whenever the narrative went back to scenes in art institutes and galleries, often coupled with satirical, larger-than-life performances of 'spineless art critics'.

That was just one of the several ways lighting (which has always been a speciality of the Finger Players) was creatively used to tap on audience imaginations to shape a barren stage. Flashes of light reveal the ghastly faces of killers and bodies caught dead in motion. Shadows grow and fade on translucent screens as Hitler, a Hyde-like alter-ego created in Jekyll's bipolarity, traverses the stage and intimidates the Prime Minister. The audience ourselves are caught in a wash and find our reflections in the mirrors on-stage, presented as subjects of execution. As I reveled in the visual spectacle and the various emotions it stirred in me, I had to seriously commend the technical precision and ingenuity in successfully presenting each successively brilliant and complex lighting designs.

The sheer strength of the cast is also undeniable. In spite of having multiple roles, the actors delivered in spades, playing their characters with depth and conviction. On one end, we were treated to the wonderful comic timing of the commissioner (Julius Foo), who stirs the audience up with his wayward sense of morality revealed from his exchanges with the other bureaucrats. On the other, we witnessed the nail-biting exchanges between Jekyll (Daniel York) and Eva (Podesta) – two characters fraught in a constantly mounting psychological turmoil that never ceases till Hitler pulls the trigger. Jekyll/Hitler's erratic personality switches are eerily vivid and convincing, and so is Eva's palpable guilt and suffering as she witnesses her own moral decay from being Jekyll's muse.

What remains a personal grudge to me, however, is that I found it hard to extrapolate the issues raised in the play to our social reality. I did appreciate the themes that were raised, such as the inherent subjectivity that lies beneath institutions and systems, and the power of art to bring to focus the longings and ideals of eras past and present. However, I found that connecting the historical carnage of the Holocaust to a personal bipolar complex ended up depoliticizing the play, allowing me to conveniently associate the problems presented within the narrative with Jekyll/Hitler's mental disorder. Perhaps a more rational and less visceral presentation of Jekyll/Hitler's rise to political power would have better framed the play as a representation of a larger social disease, where in Eva's words, 'we are the Jekylls and Hydes of our own making'. Apart from that, Starring Hitler as Jekyll and Hyde has all the elements of a great show, with a distinctive storytelling style that is undeniably refreshing and haunting to watch.

By Michael N. for Bakchormeeboy