

STARRING HITLER AS JEKYLL AND HYDE by The Finger Players

Theatre Reviews

“Like a Mirror of Society”

Reviewer: Isaac Lim

Performance: 15 October 2016

The actors walk onto stage as themselves, holding a placard with their own race written on it. We see Edith Podesta as “Italian” and Daniel York as “Eurasian”, before they flip into the “race” of their characters, either “Jew” or “German”.

Now, enter this fictional world.

Starring Hitler is very cleverly written, and kudos to the team of actors who carried the ensemble performance very well. The larger narrative is to put Adolf Hitler’s wife, Eva Braun, played by Podesta, on trial for her husband’s atrocities. Then we see Hitler himself, imagined to embody both the eponymous character Dr. Jekyll, from Robert Louis Stevenson’s creation, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

What happened, or did not happen, is retold by the likes of a Mr. Stevenson, and Gabriel, an inspector into the case who will rise to become the Prime Minister. There are forbidden love stories between a commissioner and his assistant, and Gabriel and his Jewish nanny.

In the chaotic world, both in and out of reality, with quite a bit of revisionism, Hitler/Jekyll throws forward the notion of art and its intrinsic value in society. Then, we see the brutal racism and xenophobia, in a space where there is nary a divide between the groups and classes.

What if, like Hitler/Jekyll, we are all innately fickle, anti-social, xenophobic, and a little mental. Are we not all that little bit schizophrenic, sometimes?

The many times that two-way mirrors are used on stage boldly invites the audience to partake in the process of storytelling, they play lends itself as a mirror to the society today. The stage is at most-times bare. The dream team of lighting and sound composer/designer Lim Woan Wen and Darren Ng are left to illuminate the show, as well as the performers. The use of human shadow puppetry as several points in the play seemed to be an ode to the company’s origins, but is overall effective as a device in the storytelling, especially in later scenes when the screen covers only half the actors’ bodies.

The veteran performers are the ones here that truly hold fort. Other than Podesta and York, Jo Kukathas and Julius Foo gave solid performances in their various characters. However, Foo seem to have a problem of dropping his English accent at times, but it still worked as it jolts us awake that the situation is actually very Singaporean as well.

This play boldly pits us to rethink the value of art today, the value of our lives, of politics, of society, and of xenophobia around us.