



Theatre review: Little Willy is sweet dirty fun

Little Willy is a charmingly hilarious show with ridiculously eccentric and often tragically flawed characters.

By David C. Jones
January 11, 2023

By the end, I was laughing like a fool!

An eccentric collection of marionettes burst from the mind of the ingenious Ronnie Burkett, the Daisy Theatre gang is back. And while they've been to Vancouver before, and many get locked into specific comedy routines, they are so charmingly funny it's like visiting family.

In *Little Willy*, this company of crazies is trying to produce *Romeo and Juliet* under the guidance of The Bard himself. The show opens with Dolly Wiggler performing an amazing marionette striptease to a song written by John Alcorn, one of several fun and witty songs. Different characters perform various portions of *Romeo and Juliet*, sometimes with exposition and sometimes acting out the scenes.

For example, Mrs. Edna Rural tells the story of the courtship between Romeo and Juliet and compares it to her own romance with a slightly reserved man whose proposal boiled down to asking, "so are you in or are you out?". Schnitzel, the charming little fairy, acts out the balcony scene by playing both title characters.

In addition, there is the cross-dressing general, an appearance by Jesus, and the faded diva Esme Massengill arguing with some other women about playing Juliet.

One thing that makes the show such an audience pleaser is that it is so clever with marionettes, and now and then, there's a cuss word thrown in. But Burkett is so charming that we don't take offence. Instead, the shock value delights.

I did wonder if the scene where a shirtless male audience member lies on the ground while a puppet hand lightly taps the bulge in their jeans was going to be included. Had the world changed in three years since we last saw these characters, and would we be too sensitive to this non-consensual puppet groping? Would the audience take offence? I was relieved the bit was met with uproarious laughter, as did the dancing penises in another musical number.

Burkett is a master at working the audience, lowering our expectations at the beginning claiming he has no idea what he's about to do, and then masterfully dazzling us that, even if there is a minor hiccup, we still want him to succeed. Then, when he does, we leap to our feet in appreciation of his genius.

Little Willy is a charmingly hilarious show with ridiculously eccentric and often tragically flawed characters. My companion and I thought it was sweet dirty fun, and we had a great time. I think you will too.