

Review: The Daisy Theatre

Supplied

The Daisy Theatre opened at the Christchurch Arts Festival on Thursday night.

The Daisy Theatre.

Christchurch Arts Festival

Runs until August 29

Fletcher Construction Studio, Arts Centre.

The 40-strong cast of *The Daisy Theatre* hang out back stage between shows. They don't have much choice, they are marionettes.

This is a marionette show. The set up is simple. There is a small proscenium arch stage, complete with its own curtain, with a small platform above where Canadian puppet master Ronnie Burkett stands to give his characters action and voice.

is and bawdy musical numbers to more poignant and reflective moments. He animates a parade of 30-centimetre tall characters from torch singers to burlesque dancers and vaudeville acts to little old ladies.

Burkett conjures this menagerie of broad and funny characters with exceptionally delicate and precise control. Each character has their own voice, mannerisms and body language. They are capable of expressing a whole range of emotions just through the way they breathe and stand or what they do with their hands. They shimmy, they sigh and they live on the stage.

The puppeteer uses these skills to present a hilarious and fast moving two-hour tour de force. Each night the show is a semi-improvised revue show with audience interaction and flights of fancy.

It will be hard to forget the ridiculously funny sight of a 30 centimetre-tall puppet interacting seamlessly with an adult audience member sitting on the edge of the miniature stage. The puppet character reaches across and touches the audience member's chest with delicate strokes. The audience member maintains eye contact with the character, lost in the illusion with the rest of us.

The cast is comprised of inanimate objects, but they come alive. We can see the strings, we can even see the puppeteer, but we still believe there is a living, breathing character on stage.

Put simply, *The Daisy Theatre* is an act of goofy magic.

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