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## **Review: The Daisy Theatre**

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*Posted on February 28, 2018. Written by Anna Fuerstenberg*

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When was the last time you laughed so hard that you had tears rolling down your face? Ronnie Burkett, writer and performer of the puppet/marionette show, [The Daisy Theatre](#), is enormously gifted; he can have a Centaur audience laughing loudly with amazing abandon one minute, and silently watching the fate of a ventriloquist so ancient that his dummy does the entire act by himself. This is a perfect balance of light and dark. Each persona adds a magical stroke to the final montage. This maestro holds all the strings, and creates a show full of unforgettable characters while providing all their voices.

The audience does get involved in the performance as in the case of the licentious Miss Lilian Lunkhead, “Canada’s oldest and worst actress”. She presents the tomb scene from Romeo and Juliet with an audience volunteer, and the laugh which grew from a special handling of the young man recruited to play Romeo, was sustained for over fifteen minutes. This marionette has such grace that she manages to make the poor gentleman volunteer blush, and huge applause from the audience.

Burkett is a multi-talented and greatly awarded maestro with world-wide acclaim for his many works. He manages this splendid variety of characters where just the smallest gesture of a diva’s hand can evoke laughter and then with another tiny gesture, has his public in tears. It was a delight to hear Ms. Rosemary Focaccia sing her torch song to Italian cuisine, accompanied by an entire orchestra. Mrs. Edna Rural gave such a realistic rendition of a farm woman trying to get around despite arthritis as she lowers herself into and out of a large armchair, that my spinal stenosis acted up in empathy.

It was deliciously touching to hear the dummy perform for his “creator-ventriloquist”, Meyer Lemon, and it is a fine metaphor for the writers and directors among us. When we fail, our work will continue to tell our story. The little fairy child schnitzel who is warned “not to step over the line” where the

stage ends, has such an amazing effect on the public that her relationship with her puppet master is both moving and deeply existential.

There are so many sides to this show. There are moments when Burkett's personae are arguing, and he manages to separate and express them with intense and rapid amazing clarity. Burkett named the show as an homage to the puppeteers in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia, who claimed that their work, like daisies, needed little light, but survived in horrible conditions. On a freezing night, the warmth of the performances and the raucous response of the audience are welcome relief.

If you are one of the privileged who get tickets to see this master work, defy the weather and head to the Centaur Theatre.