

## The Daisy Theatre is one of the best shows you'll ever see

by [Colin Thomas](#) on Nov 27, 2013 at 2:50 pm



**Created and performed by Ronnie Burkett. A Ronnie Burkett Theatre of Marionettes production presented by the Cultch. In the Historic Theatre at the Cultch on Tuesday, November 26. Continues until December 15**

Imagine having the best playmate ever. That person is probably a lot like Ronnie Burkett. In *The Daisy Theatre*, the master marionette artist is having the time of his life. He's insanely skilled, he is fearlessly willing to go wherever the moment takes him, and the sense of giddy possibility that his creativity releases is a gift.

In *The Daisy Theatre*, Burkett mostly tosses plot out the window and offers a series of vignettes involving wildly eccentric characters: several marionettes and, of course, Burkett himself.

I'm in love with Esme Massengill. Just over a foot tall, Esme describes herself as the love child of Tallulah Bankhead and Mr. Magoo, but she is, above all, a gloriously faded star. When she entered on opening night and the audience in the East Van venue failed to recognize her and give her a screaming ovation, she fixed a withering gaze on us and declared: "I don't blame you; I pity you!" Moments later, in the course of teaching us how to properly greet a diva, she tried to make up. She said she knew we were doing our best at this evening of theatre: "Some of you have your *nice* Birkenstocks on." One of the sexier highlights of the evening involved Esme, a hunky man from the audience, and let's just say a juxtaposition of bodily scale.

Burkett is working with a number of characters who all have their own monologues and he presents them in different combinations every night, so the show can run anywhere from 90 minutes to a couple of hours without a break. When she first arrived, I didn't think that I was going to like Mrs. Edna Rural from Turnip Corners, "a silly old biddy in a Sears housedress", but she completely won me over. Even now, as I remember her widowhood, her encroaching dementia, and the way her little hand tapped as she gazed at her wedding ring, I'm reduced to tears.

Marionettes are hugely about physicality, of course. With Schnitzel, a little guy who wants to be a fairy and who gets bullied by a muscular perv named Franz, the charm is in his sloped neck, the way he turns his head up meekly to look at us, and his energetic, clattering walk. Schnitzel appears a couple of times, and his aspiration to fly gives the evening its heart and its arc.

*The Daisy Theatre* is one of the best shows you'll ever see. What are you waiting for? Pick up the phone.

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