



A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste

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Theatre

10 Days on Earth

2 stars Pit, London

Lyn Gardner

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Guardian

Ronnie Burkett makes theatre about the small people. A puppeteer, his creations are seldom more than 2ft high, and his one-man shows - often with huge casts featuring extraordinary detailed marionettes - are remarkable feats of both manipulation and imagination.

Burkett is not just a superb puppeteer, he is a fine writer and actor too. You entirely forget that his characters are made of wood and cloth. *10 Days on Earth* is a typical Burkett creation telling the story of Darrel Glebeholme, a middle-aged shoeshine man with learning difficulties who, over the course of 10 days, comes to realise that his mother has no further need for her shoes. Using flashbacks to fill in the story of the lonely life of Darrel's mother, *10 Days* intercuts this tale with technicolour segments depicting Honeydog, a gentleman terrier, and newborn duckling Little Burp, two characters from Darrel's favourite childhood picture book, who are on a quest to find a home for themselves.

The result is both desolate and warmly sentimental, as if a Samuel Beckett play about the loneliness of existence had been bashed over the head by *The Wizard of Oz* and *Mother Goose*. Burkett, who in the past has often shared the stage with his creations, here takes a more traditional puppet master stance.

If, at two hours, the show is a mite self-indulgent, it is worth your time because Darrel's homespun wisdom is a reminder that life is sweetest when lived "simply, simply".

· Until May 5. Box office: 0845 120 7500