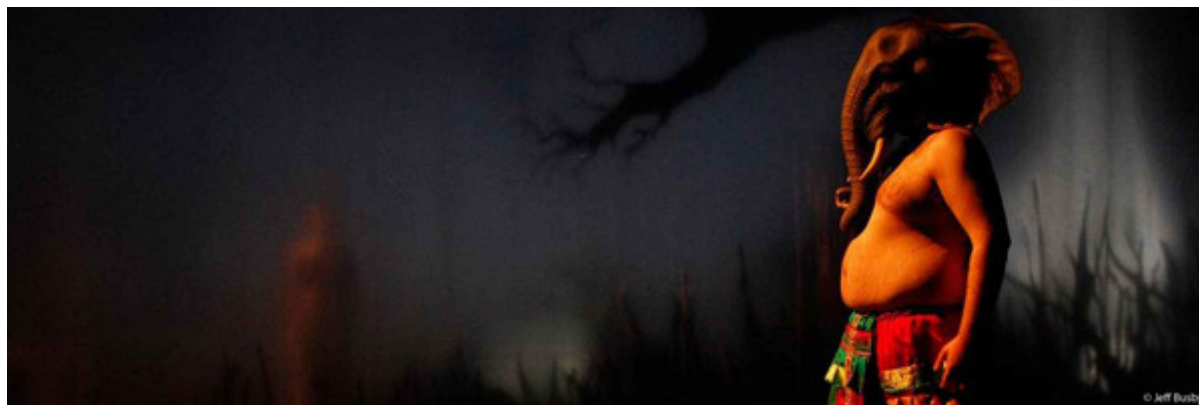

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Dublin Theatre Festival 2014 – A theatrical Ganesh is a triumphant success

October 1, 2014

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Ganesh Versus the Third Reich

Back to Back Theatre

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich by Back to Back Theatre

Rating: ★★★★★

Consistently garnering critical praise and awards worldwide since being first performed in 2011, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich*, by Australian company Back to Back Theatre, arrived at The Dublin Theatre Festival with a lot to live up to. Featuring a cast of predominately intellectually disabled, or those perceived as intellectually disabled, performers, courting controversy during its inception and devised as a self-professed challenge to the company's own sense of self-censorship, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* promised to be both complex and innovative. In the end what's offered is incredibly simple. Yet like most simple things, all the better, richer and more powerful for being so.

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich combines two, interwoven stories. The first concerns the Hindu deity, Ganesh, who undertakes the task of reclaiming the Sanskrit symbol of the swastika, stolen by the Nazi's, in order to appease his father's anger and dissuade him from ending the world. The second story revolves around the ensembles attempt to cast, direct, rehearse and perform Ganesh's story. Indeed the latter could be perceived as the true story at the heart of this production, but perception itself is just one of many things always being questioned.

Featuring a five strong, male ensemble, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* is a wonderful, meta-

theatrical production that questions itself as much as the broader issues it raises. Director Bruce Gladwin pays impeccable attention to the details and ensures performers Brian Tilley, Mark Deans, Scott Price and Simon Laherty turn in delightful performances as the unhappy cast frustrated with each other and their director, played by Luke Ryan. Ryan, self-deluded and self-important, wallows in the wonderfulness of his cast, the script, their production and his own inflated sense of importance, but in his frustration is unable to control the chaos that surrounds him.

All this is played out in a terrific set design by Mark Cuthbertson, supported by a subtle lighting design by Andrew Livingston and animation by Rhian Hinkley. Utilising tall, transparent, plastic curtains, projected text, simple costumes and some clever silhouettes, the contrast between the mythical journey of Ganesh and the world of the players was wonderfully realised. Indeed technical standards were high throughout and Costumes by Shio Otani, and Mask Design by Sam Jinks and Paul Smits each made significant contributions to the overall feel of the production.

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich is a deeply moving and incredibly funny production, one that is unafraid of being vulnerable, disturbing and of testing boundaries. It is a simple tale, simply executed, but simple doesn't mean easy. Layer upon layer of text and subtext challenge the audience's perceptions of theatre and disability, both directly and indirectly. Thought provoking without being didactic, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* feels almost poetic at times, with new meanings and connections rewarding deeper reflection. This incredible production is a testament to a dedicated company who refuse to be confined within the roles often assigned to them, both by society and by themselves. But ultimately *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* is all about making great theatre.

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich by Back to Back Theatre runs as part of The Dublin Theatre Festival at The O'Reilly Theatre, Belvedere until Saturday, October 4th

Doors open 7.30 p.m.

Tickets €25.00/ €30.00

For more information go to <https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com>



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