

# British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

## The Clock Master

Louisa Ashton

Sparkle & Dark's Travelling Players

Rosemary Branch Theatre and touring

(2011)

Running a little over an hour and aimed at anyone from about five years old upwards, *The Clock Master* presents its audience with a collection of stories about a mechanical girl, a musical box and a watch that can halt time. They all involve pieces of clockwork and are appropriately introduced by Dewi Evan's Clock Master who introduces characters both human and mechanical.

They start off with a beady-eyed girl who brings a watch to him, dirty, broken and horrible she thinks, but then as Louise Ashton plays her, she is not very nice either. When in a garden she sees a mechanical girl she winds it up and brings the doll to life and finds herself unable to move. Another story introduces a flute playing monkey, delightfully played by Ceridwen Smith. Then there is blind boy Mo and his dog Bruiser, who may look cuddly but he's trained to kill. Mo, who is trying to find the magic watch that will stop time and prevent his dad from dying, is given the choice of sight instead.

Puppetry is used to present the clockwork girl, Mo and Bruiser. They are operated by the Clockmaster's Assistant Sophie Wyburn and the other members of the cast, and there are flying paper birds and magical moving balls of light that keep on changing colour.

It all takes place in the Clock Master's shop which the nasty girl may think 'full of junk' but Anna Shuttleworth's set looks a pretty magical place to me, with Sam Swift-Glassmans projected animations of turning clockwork and birds flying through the sky and Lenka Kupkova's colourful costumes.

Shelly Knowles-Dixon's puppets range from the elaborate golden girl to simple folds of coloured paper. It is a happy mixture of the richly opulent and the very simple that matches the performances. There is a particularly delightful contribution from guitarist composer Lawrence Illsley who is on stage all the time, his music adding a great deal to the atmosphere and he almost becomes part of the action with puppets swinging on his guitar. Neither the clockwork golden girl nor killer dog Bruiser confine themselves to the stage, but even if a person in the audience doesn't make physical contact with any of the characters they will certainly be engaged by them.

The intimacy this company create, especially in a venue like the Rosie, was emphasised as they finally left the stage when, to the delight of the little boy in front of me, Monkey presented him with one of the paper birds. A magic moment.

*"The Clock Master" is at the Rosemary Branch Theatre until 19th June then The Lowry, Manchester 26th June, Buxton Festival, Paupers Pit 8th - 10th July, Latitude Festival 15th-16th July 2011*

Reviewer: [Howard Loxton](#)