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Review: THE CAUTIONARY TALE OF BARRY VON PEABODY AND THE SCARLET ST THEATRE

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It's the little things in life...

By Adam Tonking



<http://theatrepress.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/the-cautionary-tale-of-barry-von-peabody.jpg>

Prepare yourself for an avalanche of cute. *The Cautionary Tale of Barry Von Peabody and the Scarlet St Theatre* is an **epic tale of death and redemption**, about a child from Berlin in 1938 who grows up to sacrifice everyone he loves as rebellion against his strict German father. And it's **performed by Jacob Williams' adorable and tiny little puppets.**

The story itself sounds bleak and depressing, but ultimately the story is unimportant, and not even particularly well told. **The focus here is the gorgeous puppets**, and the artistry of Williams and his tiny little theatre. There is just no end to the detail Williams has put into his show – **tiny little red velvet curtains on a tiny little stage** with tiny little footlights and gargoyles. And it is damn cute.

The characters are eccentric-looking creatures, and **Williams brings them to life through his impressive talent**. After all this is an epic tale, covering several decades, different locations, and many different characters. **All of this is manipulated by Williams alone**: the cast, the set-changes, lighting cues, the special effects – he even manages to involve the audience. **It is a monumental feat, and Williams pulls it off brilliantly**.

Restricting the audience to fifteen at a time I assume was mainly for the logistics of ensuring everyone could see the tiny little puppets, but **it also lent the show a sense of intimacy and comradery**, not only with the audience but with the puppets and the puppetmaster as well. **The novelty of all this adorableness never grows tiresome**, and even stretches to cover any gaps in pacing and storytelling. This is all about the cute characters, adorable staging, and the clever manipulator Williams. **Sit back, admire the technical brilliance, and prepare to say “Awwww!” a lot**.

The Cautionary Tale of Barry Von Peabody and the Scarlet St Theatre is on at La Mama Theatre, 205 Faraday Street, Carlton 3053 from Tuesday 10 April till Sunday 22 April, at 6.30pm Tuesday, 8.30pm Wednesday, 9pm Thursday and Friday, and 4pm Saturday and Sunday. **Book at www.lamama.com.au (<http://www.lamama.com.au/>) or by calling 9347 6142.**

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