

The Man Who Knows It All review at Unicorn Theatre, London – ‘silly, yet sophisticated’



Scene from *The Man Who Knows It All* at Unicorn Theatre, London

Various Children's theatre by Rafaella Marcus - Jun 1, 2017

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Dutch children's theatre company Theatre Artemis specialise in questioning authority. In *The Man Who Knows It All* this is done through a simple, silly mechanism that delightfully unravels the title character's claims to omniscience.

The Man in question (Rene van't Hof) presents himself as a kind of stage magician-cum-televangelist – shiny-jacketed, and promising wonders, the show rapidly descends into farce as it becomes apparent that the Man can't even recite a simple list of colours without support from his tenderly encouraging stage manager/best friend (Tjebbe Roelofs) and, of course, the audience.

Everything is pulled together with delicate physical comedy, from Roelof's attempts to tame an errant broom to Van't Hof's David Brent-esque nerviness. Well-worn gags about trying to chase a spotlight that insists on moving, or over-eager musician Keimpe de Jong's repeatedly miscued theme music are delivered with absolute sincerity and work a treat here – a kind of stand-up comedy for under-10s.

Never inviting us to ridicule the Man, the piece winds its audience up to a fever pitch, astonished and outraged by the palpable falsehood of a man who claims to know everything but can't sit on a chair correctly.

At times the wit is a little too dry for the kids and the performances a little too mumbly for the Unicorn auditorium, but this is nevertheless a piece that sends its audience out understanding that an authority figure who makes claims they can't back up is no authority at all.