

From Adam to atom bombs in one stark hour

THEATRE . . . by CARLA HIRSCHFIELD

SHOW: The Creation (Downstairs at Wits Theatre)

DIRECTOR: Karoly Pinter

PRODUCERS: Royal Puppet Company

If any art form is to be judged by how much impact it has and what it communicates, then this presentation of "The Creation" by the Royal Puppet Company must be rated quite highly.

It makes a statement strongly by the sheer starkness and simplicity of its presentation.

The puppets are manipulated in full view of the audience on a small raised platform. The puppeteers, Gary Friedman, Katja Hornchen, Karoly Pinter and Mikael Reiser, are dressed in black from top to toe. They form an integral part of the overall production producing vocal sound effects such as crying and sighing. All other sound, both musical and otherwise, is produced most effectively by Mark Fennell.

There is no speech. Everything is presented visually with masks, props and back slide projection.

They span almost 2 000 years of creation in the span of one hour, presenting only the salient points. This is quite an achievement.

Scenes that made an impression on me were the actual Creation where Adam and Eve emerge from the dust around them amid much sighing, and discover themselves, each other and the world; the emergence of Christianity, the Industrial Revolution, the World Wars and, in the end, man, totally overcome, a feeble victim of his own great scientific discoveries.

An image that lingers is the cloth dotted with matchstick-light crosses which is thrown on the field after the soldiers' confrontation.

Rod puppets are used in the Creation scene and it is intriguing watching them being manipulated. The manipulators look like surgeons injecting giant hypodermics into their diminutive victims. They appear to use different apparatus to achieve the various types of movements.

By its nature the presentation is slow and even paced. It makes its point on a cerebral level. It is fascinating to observe how the different types of puppets are manipulated and one must admire the skill of the puppeteers.

This is a puppet show for adults. It is not diverting entertainment for those who wish to sit back and relax.

It is thought-provoking and different.