

"Stage Whispers"
Sept/Oct. '09

Hamlet by William Shakespeare
Old Nick Company Inc. (Tas). Peacock Theatre. Directed
by John Clark.

How many Hamlets does it take to pull a crowd? When they are as good as the Old Nick Company production, with the hunky Andrew Casey in the lead role, one Hamlet will sell out a season. Directed by expatriate Tasmanian John Clark, former head of NIDA, the show has been a phenomenal success. This Hamlet was a shrunken version, shortened from the four or more hours of the folio version to 2½ hours. The play did not suffer.

One of the best "stage fights" I have seen, between Hamlet and Laertes (Steven Jones), sizzled with menace and sex appeal. The choreography was brilliant. Andrew Casey was perfect as Hamlet, portraying many personality nuances of the troubled young Danish prince. Other performances supported well. James Casey (Claudius) and Clare Gray (Gertrude) were more sympathetic villains than one expects to see, while Peter Reardon was excellently underplayed as court creep Polonius. Even though character development was reduced in the shorter version, Natalie Venatacci was a convincingly tragic Ophelia.

Supported by a competent and dedicated crew, excellent lighting and effects, this production enlightened and entertained. It is obvious that all concerned were knowledgeable of the play and enamoured of their production. When thespians love what they do, it shows. Well done Old Nick.

Merlene Abbott