

Verse drama about deception is incoherent

LUCIFER SAVED
Lion & Unicorn Theatre
★☆☆☆

How apt that Peter Oswald's play should coincide with Shakespeare's 450th birthday. Undoubtedly, the Bard is a touchstone for this unwieldy epic.

And yet the comparison does *Lucifer Saved* no favours. The master communicates universal themes and resonant emotion through transcendent poetry.

Oswald wrangles rhyming couplets in the service of something both simplistic and impenetrable.

The bare-bones story involves an army chaplain tricked by his commanding officer into believing he committed an atrocity in 1945.

Twenty years later, the truth gradually unravels on the officer's estate, juxtaposed with the antics of a travelling circus.

There are big ideas here: the horror of war as crisis of faith, grief and survivor's guilt, the power of escapism.

But what we get is a glacially paced, incoherent soap opera with creaking anti-climax. It's a tame three-hour episode of *Jeremy Kyle*.

Little is felt, most is rather bluntly and repetitively proclaimed. For a verse drama, it's strangely lacking in metaphor.

It's not helped by Ray Shell's flat staging and Sarah Vigers' limited design, grounding a potentially experimental piece in cramped naturalism.

Anthony John Crocker's bellowing tyrant is a decent pantomime villain. Oswald himself plays the chaplain, admirably committed but



■ Alison Halstead, Rupert Elford and Helen Aldrich in *Lucifer Saved* at the Lion & Unicorn Theatre
Picture: Scott Rylander

seldom convincing.

Victoria Lane has a sweet voice as the wartime songstress, but is miscast as a downtrodden naïf.

The saving grace is the circus, which, for the most part, stays mercifully clear of the sluggish melodrama. Alison Halstead's mercurial clown is a standout, at once bawdy and sweet, frenzied and shrewd. She delivers jam-

packed speeches with aplomb.

Halstead and Rupert Elford, as the sardonic sniper-turned-juggler, together blend comic absurdity with aching sadness, finding a relatable reality beneath the flights of fancy.

If only the same could be said for the rest of this curious misfire.
Until May 17.

Marianka Swain

What's On

Odeon Camden Town

Week commencing: Film times for Friday 2nd to Thursday 8th May
Cinema opening times:
Fri 14:30, Sat-Mon: 11:30, Tue-Thu: 14:30

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2 (12A)

AUDIO DESC 2H22M

FRI 14:45 17:45

SATMON 11:45 14:45 17:45

TUE-THU 14:45 17:45

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN 2 (12A)

3D AUDIO DESC 2H22M

FRI-THU 20:15

BAD NEIGHBOURS (15)

W/CHAIR 1H37M

SATMON 13:00 15:45 18:30 21:15

TUE-THU 15:45 18:30 21:15

CALVARY (15)

W/CHAIR 1H41M

FRI 15:15 21:00

SATMON 12:45 15:15 21:00

TUE-THU 15:15 21:00

GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL (15)

W/CHAIR AUDIO DESC 1H40M

FRI 15:00 17:30 20:15

SATMON 17:30 20:15

TUE-THU 15:00 17:30 20:15

LOCKE (15)

W/CHAIR AUDIO DESC 1H25M

FRI-THU 18:15

THE OTHER WOMAN (12A)

W/CHAIR 1H51M

FRI 15:30 18:00 20:30

SATMON 12:30 15:30 18:00 20:30

TUE-THU 15:30 18:00 20:30

RIO 2 (U)

W/CHAIR AUDIO DESC 1H41M

SATMON 12:15 15:00

TRANSCENDENCE (12A)

W/CHAIR AUDIO DESC 1H59M

FRI 15:45 18:30 21:15

For details and bookings visit www.odeon.co.uk or call 0871 2244007

ALL FEATURE PRESENTATIONS ARE IN ODEON DIGITAL

Cinema opens 15 minutes before the first programme



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Town Road, NW5. Katie Weston, Plastic Coppers, Trevor Holland, Luke Stephen, Jon Pearson, Rosin O Rosin, Sophie Johnson, Mark Tully, Jake Baker, Matthew Harrison, Perry Myle, Simon Caine, Lea Emery and MC Martin Besserman. £10 (concs quote *Ham&High* £5). monkeybusinesscomedyclub.co.uk. 8pm. Thursday, May 8.

Weekly Clubs and Classes

Abbey Community Centre. 222c Belsize Road, NW6. **Over-50 Men's IT.** Drop in and learn computer and internet basics with the help of friendly volunteers. Free. No booking required. 07447 932564. 11.30am-1.30pm. Wednesdays. **Coffee morning.** Find out what's going on and meet your neighbours over a cuppa. 07447 932564. 10.30am-noon. Fridays. **Bingo.** Welcoming group. 20p a game. 07447 932564. 2pm-3pm. Tuesdays.

Hampstead Heath Croquet Club. Croquet lawns, near the tennis courts, Golders Hill Park. Details hampsteadheathcroquetclub.org.uk.

Energy Healing - Highgate Healing Centre. Highgate United Reformed Church, Pond Square, Highgate, N6. £5 donation. Details on 07597 199299. 6pm-8pm. Tuesdays.
Fortune Green Choir. Emmanuel

Church, Lyncroft Gardens, West Hampstead, NW6. Repertoire ranges from pop to opera. No auditions - all welcome. £4 per session, but first one is free. Details at www.sing-for-fun-in-fortune-green.webeden.co.uk. 7pm-8.30pm. Weekly summer session starts on Tuesday, May 6.

Laughter yoga. Parliament Hill Fields bandstand, Hampstead Heath, NW5. 020 7609 6145. Celebrate World Laughter Day. Donation to charity. 11am-noon. Sundays.

Royal Free Music Society Choir. Peter Samuel Hall, Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, NW3. Details royalfreemusicsociety.org.uk. 7pm-8.30pm. Thursdays.

Hampstead Photographic Society. The Crypt, St John's Church, Church Row, Hampstead, NW3. This week: the work of photographers Lord Snowden and Hugh Diamond. With Lord Snowden's daughter Lady Frances von Hoffmannstal and Richard Lansdown. 8pm. Tuesdays.

Earth, Twig and Fire. Highgate Society Hall, Pond Square, N6. For children aged six to nine years. Outdoor activities. Details on 07712 885974. 4.30pm-6pm. Wednesdays.

Holly Lodge Community Centre. 30 Makepeace Avenue, Highgate, N6. 020 8342 9524. **Hatha yoga class:**

2pm-3pm. Thursdays. **Tai Chi class:** 8pm-9pm. Thursdays. **Women's Institute.** 7.30pm-9.30pm. Every third Wednesday of the month.

Fleet Singers Community Choir. Gospel Oak Methodist Church, Agincourt Road/Lisburne Road, NW3. Details on 07956 835361. 7.30pm-9.30pm. Mondays.

Belsize Wood and Adelaide Local Nature Reserve Green Gym. At Adelaide on the last Sunday of the month, all other Sundays at Belsize Wood. Free. For ages 14 and above. Details on 07769 642395 (weekdays). 11am-2pm. Sundays.

Fleet Music Group. Swiss Cottage Community Centre, Winchester Road, NW3. Mainly classical music. Contact 020 7722 0059. 3pm-5pm. Fridays.

Weekly Clubs at Burgh House. New End Square, Hampstead, NW3. **Bridge:** 1.30pm. Wednesdays. **Scrabble:** 2pm. Thursdays. **Singing Sessions:** 12.15pm-1.15pm. Fridays.

Life Drawing Class. Hampstead Community Centre, High Street, NW3. Details on 020 7794 8313. £9 per session. 7pm-9.15pm. Wednesdays.

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