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Entertainment

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Everybody

- Reviewed by Rebecca Harkins-Cross

Snuff Puppets
The Drill Hall

SNUFF Puppets take delight in showing you the strings, affronting puppetry's forebears along with everyone else.



Everybody, the latest show from the Snuff Puppets. Photo: Michael Clayton-Jones

Now 20 years old, the Footscray-based company is renowned for its purposefully handmade aesthetic. Its Frankensteinian abominations are a welcome antidote to

the sanitised Disney character, celebrating the abject, the scatological and the perverse.

Surreal vignettes are loosely connected through a cyclical focus on birth and death, continuing the company's childlike fascination with bodily function. Resonances of the bizarre animations of the Czech surrealist Jan Svankmajer can be found in their grotesque imagery and irreverent humour.

A giant, lolling puppet sprawls across the room, the audience encouraged to nestle into its distended limbs. The body gradually disassembles over the course of the show, revealing hidden orifices and crevices that give birth to various freaks. Puppet and puppet master become one as performers inhabit their ungodly creations, combining physical theatre and slapstick acrobatics to bring them to life.

Live musicians reside like a heart in the ribcage, playing a corporeal symphony of gaseous emissions and spectral sounds.

Taboos are shattered as a giant bottom excretes performers dressed as feces, or a vagina morphs into an erect penis. A carnival-esque mood takes over as the body eventually disintegrates, embracing playful chaos with the audience looped by intestines, swallowed by an overzealous mouth or accosted by a severed foot.

In an age defined by digital spectacle, there is a renewed sense of wonder in these handcrafted illusions, as joyously distasteful as they may be.