

Review: The Terrible Infants at Wilton's Music Hall

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"A unique piece of theatre": B. L. Sherrington warms to Les Enfants Terribles' grisly, quirky award-winning show about unruly children, a decade after its premiere.

[B. L. SHERRINGTON](#)



The Terrible Infants, Wilton's Music Hall. Photo: Rah Petherbridge.

Terrible by name, terrible by nature: the young subjects of the tales told in Les Enfants Terribles' award-winning 2007 show *The Terrible Infants* sound like a nightmare; I raise a glass to their parents.

Appearing at Wilton's Music Hall for the first time – the show's ideal venue, with its craggy, faded charm – *The Terrible Infants* weaves together the grisly, quirky stories of various petulant children using a winning combination of clowning and puppetry.

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Samuel Wyer's design can only be described as shabby chic. From the large, dramatic red curtains, scattered violins, assorted suitcases, old dolls and fairy lights, it at first appears to resemble the inside of a children's toy box, but at second glance, once the cast appears, it's more like an abandoned attic or

a bohemian Parisian apartment.

The use of humour is intelligently pitched throughout, with physical and slapstick comedy rubbing alongside vocal gags, and the show strongly resembles a pantomime at points. An interesting, if not subtle form of comedy comes from how the actors over-emphasise their characters' personality traits. The exaggeration of a controlling nature, or of a blunt stubbornness, becomes broad material for the audience to feast upon.

The strongest element, however, is the inventive use of props and puppetry, particularly the use of plastic strips to recreate the ripples of an ocean wave, an effect that was unexpectedly calming. The unruly children at the centre of the show are recreated smartly through puppetry. Helped by some extraordinary choreography, they appear to be of another world, something straight out of a Tim Burton movie.

The action is heavily supported by the atmospheric music; the use of piano and saxophone adds intensity when the tales are being read from the storybook. Unfortunately, it felt as if these aspects had to make up for the eclecticism in the costume department, which disrupted the production's rhythm, with some cast members embracing Gothic culture at its most Marilyn Manson, and others preferring a Chic Doll aesthetic.

Ultimately, the whole thing feels like a trip to the circus. It's a clever move; this way, both adults and children are kept happy. Throw in the lively interaction the cast have with the audience, which borders on flirting at times, and *The Terrible Infants* becomes without a doubt a unique piece of theatre, meticulously put together.

The Terrible Infants is at Wilton's Music Hall until October 28th. For more details, [click here](#).

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DIRECTED BY Oliver Lansley, James Seager

WRITTEN BY Oliver Lansley

CAST INCLUDES Becky Bainbridge, Richard Booth, Oliver Lansley, Serena Manteghi and Christo Squier.