



THE SCOTSMAN

WEDNESDAY 28 MAY 2003

♦ SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER ♦

CHILDREN'S THEATRE **Snow White**

★★★★

TRAVERSE THEATRE,
EDINBURGH

THEATRE is fighting back against the syrupy Disneyfication of some of our best-loved children's tales at the Bank of Scotland International Children's Festival.

This Swiss version of *Snow White* takes us far away from bunnies and little dickie birds to an altogether darker place that doesn't even feature a prince – just a bloke called John, an aimless wanderer who gets drawn into Snow White's story and eventually saves her.

Three actors with three instruments on a spare, black costumeless set tell the story. Between them, they create a soundscape of scratches and whispers that develop into snatches of Elgar and operatic singing.

When her mother dies, Snow White's father employs a singing teacher to assuage her grief. Unfortunately, the nasty, snappish teacher then marries the king and turns into the wicked stepmother.

Snow White turns out to be a terrible hair-twiddler who wipes snot on her sleeve and has an irritating habit of blowing in people's faces.

John is instructed to bring Snow White's still-warm heart to the queen. He tricks her with a deer's heart, removing it from the animal in the most disgusting biological detail while the young audience revel in the mimed gore.

Meanwhile, Snow White escapes to the dwarfs' house where, I am delighted, to say she does absolutely no housework at all.

Attempting to poison her with all sorts of things including a table and a chair, the queen is constantly thwarted by the ingenious dwarfs who simply suck the poison out of Snow White's fingertips and bring her back to life.

Theatre Sgaramusch seems slightly wary about using English, and the show could do with a little more pep. But it is an intriguingly sophisticated account of an old favourite.

Jan Ellis