

# Six Characters in Search of an Author



[Gryphon Theatre](#)

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**Six Characters in Search of an Author** is Luigi Pirandello's much touted classic, often name dropped but rarely seen. Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe, a community theatre group based in Eastbourne, now offers an opportunity to view this searchingly existentialist piece about the nature of Pirandello's "sprightly young helpmate"; Imagination.

To confess: I am not much used to community theatre, and do not feel too well equipped to critique it. However, it was a warming experience to view actors and crew rehearsing *Six Characters* at Gryphon on a work night, the dedication and love for the art keeping their patience and spirits high and indeed keeping the BCTT alive for twenty years now. While the performances are, understandably, amateur and unpolished at times, two strong interpretations by Amber Baldock as Step-daughter and Peter Baldock as Father keep the production engaging, and humour from the 'Director' (Will Clannachan) and 'Actors' lightens the play's graver moments.

Director John Marwick has adapted Pirandello's script to bring a modernised version that does not fall into the trap of over-kiwisation of language; the changes are just enough to convey the original meanings Pirandello intended. While further could be done to give the six 'Characters' a greater sense of unreality (I like the idea of the contorted, emotive masks Pirandello himself suggests) the disparity between Characters and Actors is vividly portrayed in the acting, excellent costuming, and use of theatrical space. With the exception of Amber and Peter Baldock the cast – especially the Actors - could work more to inhabit the set and match dialogue with physical acting and movement, however.

While needing to pick up the pace somewhat, the first half conveys the essence of theatre as a game – a "play" – and successfully establishes the rivalry of Actors and Characters. The Actors are seeking to make their 'play' appear more real, ironically through the use of illusion; while the Characters seek to make clear the nature of their 'reality'; as more immutable and solid than the Actors'.

The second half continues to build on the tension of the first, and in several engrossing moments captures the drama of the central conflicts: the Stepdaughter-Father relationship, and the fates of the brooding, silent children. The Father delivers his lines forcefully and competently; his indignant touch of staunchness working well to maintain his pride and chauvinism. Perhaps Peter Baldock could work towards greater inflection and variation in this role however, as often the torment and horror of his character does not come through strongly enough. Similarly in his intimate battles with Stepdaughter, he appears too emotionally detached to give us a real sense of his remorse.

Fran Baldock gives a smooth performance as Mother, her submission and sorrow believably all consuming. Theo Nettleton is also consistent as Son, though unclenched fists and greater use

of gesture could help him to fit more comfortably into this role. And Joanna Hulme is a fittingly capricious Leading Lady; together with David Gledhill she provides enjoyable light relief to the Characters' mournful story.

In *Six Characters in Search of an Author* Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe is providing a rare chance to view a challenging and multi-layered theatrical masterpiece. While obviously in a different realm from the likes of much professional theatre on show around Wellington, the show has moments of strong acting and healthy spirit. ■

» By Luigi Pirandello | Translated, adapted and directed by John Marwick | Presented by the [Butterfly Creek Theatre Troupe](#)