



lowbrow, puerile and vulgar, you're right. And, of course, that's the point.

Olivier Award-winning Miles Western manages to be both deliciously camp and scary, singing the outrageous 'If I Could Smell Her Cunt' with a stony-face as a couple interpret the lyrics through ballet. Likewise Tory Ross, who starred in the original Broadway production, is hilarious as she stumbles, gurns and staggers her way to the story's climax as Agent Starling.

Part South Park, part Acorn Antiques, the cast provide such a riotous evening even the memory of French and Saunders' spoof becomes a dim memory. So bad it's good, so wrong it's right, *Silence! The Musical* is a short, sharp and seriously silly show that reminds us, in the era of slick, big budget jukebox musicals, why we need the fringe more than ever. ★★★★★



Silence! The Musical

Above The Stag Theatre

If you thought the story of Hannibal the Cannibal and woman-suit wearing Buffalo Bill couldn't get any more perverse, think again. With dodgy accents, dodgier wigs and wobbling scenery, *Silence! The Musical* - a musical parody of *The Silence of the Lambs* - is the year's trashiest theatrical event so far.

Revering in its rock bottom budget where guns, and at one point even a moustache, are mimed, Hannibal Lecter tells us he actually ate his victim with an indifferent Beaujolais and a fluffy risotto, not Chianti and fava beans. Meanwhile Clarice accidentally presents him her appointment card for a high colonic (nozzle size: large) instead of her FBI I.D. If that sounds

Silence! The Musical photographs © Derek Drescher



who wants to come out after meeting his new hustler boyfriend Alex (Harry Lloyd). The problem is, if Mitchell wants to star in the latest big-budget Broke-back-style blockbuster, he needs to stay in the closet, but Mitchell is so naive he wants to take his mother to an award ceremony 'so that no one will know he's gay.'

The hypocrisy of the film industry is familiar: gay movies are fine as long as straight actors star in them. What *The Little Dog Laughed* deftly highlights is that although the people who work in Hollywood might not be homophobic, the fear of making a loss at the multiplex certainly makes the movie business institutionally so.

Luckily (or unluckily depending on your point of view) Mitchell has his Armani-clad lesbian agent Diane (Tamsin Greig) on hand to guide him through the shark-infested waters of

The Little Dog Laughed

Garrick Theatre

Fast-paced and seething with cynicism, *The Little Dog Laughed* is a sassy four-hander comedy from Douglas Carter Beane, the writer of camp cult movie *Wong Foo*.

The plot revolves around the closeted actor, Mitchell (Rupert Friend),

showbusiness. Her advice to Mitchell about coming out is: 'Are you British? Do you have a knighthood? If not, shut up.' As Diane, Greig is both grotesque and hilarious. In fact, she's the highlight of the show.

While the plot and characterisation verge on the light side, Greig's feistiness and Beane's slick comic dialogue - alongside his knowledge that in Hollywood it's what you don't talk about that matters - *The Little Dog Laughed* is an effortlessly amusing night. ★★★★★

The Little Dog Laughed photograph © Hugo Glendinning

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