



Thursday, February 10, 2005

## **BLUE PLANET** \* \* \* \* (4 stars)

**Featuring Kevin Bundy, Paul Dunn, Audrey Dwyer. Written by Andri Snær Magnason. Translated by Julian d'Aroy, Andri Snær Magnason. Directed by Allen MacInnis. To Mar 20. Mon-Thu mats 10:15am, 1pm; Sat mats 12:30pm, 4pm; Sun mat 2pm; no show Feb 13. \$19-\$29; Sat limited PWYC (Feb only). Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People Mainstage, 165 Front E. 416-862-2222.**

Ah, children's theatre: it's just like adults' theatre, only with more violence and depression. And a much bigger budget. And better actors. And scenery. And jokes. Sometimes, it's almost like watching a proper play.

The very fun *Blue Planet* is based on a best-seller by the Icelandic author, Andri Snær Magnason. The book has yet to receive a Canadian publisher, because of some fuss over a scene in which a child clubs a seal to death and then grills it.

Over here, of course, children are too busy stabbing and setting fire to prostitutes on *Grand Theft Auto* to worry about that kind of muck. The stage version of *Blue Planet* has plenty of stuff children will love: peeing, farting, puking -- all the classics -- and a monster that devours "delicious child-flesh." The seal clubbing, when it comes, happens offstage, but you can't have everything.

By comparison, the storyline is a little square and hectoring. The *Blue Planet* is a paradisiacal place where children have fun every day and never grow up. If you suspect a laboured metaphor on the approach, award yourself five gold stars.

One day, an interplanetary vacuum salesman named Jolly Goodday (Kevin Bundy) crash lands on the planet and teaches the children how to fly in exchange for "a small percentage" of their eternal youth. (His rocket ship is powered by youth, which is very ecologically sound.)

It soon becomes obvious that we're to be told a lesson: something about rampant consumerism and how it's destroying the environment. Pass the Smarties. But at least *Blue Planet* never forgets how to entertain us, thanks to its extraordinarily beautiful production design: wolves are turned into clouds, spiders attack, the sun is nailed to the sky and you'll believe that children can fly (when they're attached to a large wooden pole).

Also watch out for Paul Dunn (as the leading child, Brimir), who was terrific in last year's entirely adult *Pterodactyls*, and is also excellent here, in a completely different kind of role. This ain't kids' stuff, you know.

**PAUL ISAACS**