



[GOOD](#) by C P Taylor

Performed at **[Royal Exchange Theatre](#)**

Directed by Polly Findlay and designed by James Cotterill

Reviewed by **[Jane Turner](#)** October 2011

It's a strange mixed-up fantasy, but if you fancy seeing Hitler in plus-fours and arrive at the gates of Auschwitz in a flash of light as the curtain falls feeling tense, disorientated, bewildered and yet somehow gripped, "Good" might be just right for you. I may have had a sense of humour biopsy but I think it would be "good" if history was portrayed more accurately.

I found it a little difficult to settle in my seat; I was un-comfortable, not because of the fine upholstery, but bothered by the four letter-word of the title – Good. A bit subjective to begin with and even more so when tackling the consequences of German Fascism. Good/evil, black/white? Most of us know that things are never that clear cut or straightforward. Who and what is good or evil, and who decides is the rather complex question taken up by CP Taylor, the author of this story.

This play – part of the Royal Exchange Theatre’s new Autumn/Winter Season, was originally written in 1981 and commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and has since been acknowledged as a modern classic. It is a rather sober story about a somewhat serious matter – eugenics, and as with most serious tales, there is a moral message at its heart, which is “all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing” (a quote attributed to Edmund Burke).

It is a directorial challenge for Polly Findlay as although the subject matter is serious, the play itself is actually a musical comedy, and a comedy of a type that I personally didn’t laugh at – not once. Nevertheless, she manages to bring a certain lightness to a dark subject and eases the audience in to the bleakness of the second half by clever use of set pieces, interspersed with musical interludes perfectly performed by a small but talented cast. The stage is sparsely set, but with creative use of light and sound it is brought into character, one minute gloomy and threatening, the next full of sparkle and get-up-and-go.



