






THE  TIMES

## Titus at Summerhall

**Anna Burnside**

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Titus is a 10-year-old boy, naughty, annoying, damaged. He draws on his bedroom walls, checks out boobs and legs from the bottom of the swimming pool, uses Nurofen in place of bubble bath and comments candidly on his doctor's halitosis. He is named, not after the mighty Roman general but after the family's dear departed pet pig.

Titus is on the edge. Literally. We meet him on the edge of the school roof, preparing to jump. Oliver Emanuel's light-handed translation of Jan Sobrie's classic text takes us, via clever jump cuts, through the events that have brought him there. His voice is brilliantly realised: tragedy and its aftermath have forced Titus to grow up way before his time but there are occasional flashes of the child he still should be.

There is something of the young Lee Evans in the frenetic energy of Joe Arkley, whose solo performance brings Titus straight to life. He is utterly believable: exasperating, put-upon, gawky in front of girls, not nearly as worldly as he thinks he is. (His mother, for example, won three Olympic gold medals for swimming. Sadly, she had to melt them down to make her wedding ring.) It is a testing part under ideal circumstances. Arkley pulled it off with a gale threatening to blow a flapping tarpaulin off the roof.

*Titus* is listed as a children's show, for ages ten and over. While it's certainly a fantastic piece for older children it would also work for anyone who enjoyed *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, or who reads *Not Now, Bernard* to their kids, or has a teenage lad about the place. In fact, make that anyone who appreciates great theatre.

**Box office: 0845 874 3001, to Aug 25**

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**Simon Shaw**

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