

The Good Person
of Sichuan

The Drum



Nearly three hours of Bertolt Brecht's didactic theatre strikes me as quite a lot, particularly on a muggy evening in The Drum's airless theatre.

But this special production for the New Generation Arts Festival has energy and some strong performances, and as a showcase for professional actors recently

graduated from the Birmingham School of Acting it makes its point.

At its centre there is a particularly winning performance by Naomi Said as Shen Te, the prostitute with a heart of gold who seems like the best bet when three gods descend from heaven to find the one person successfully living a good life who will save them having to rewrite their commandments.

It's really a double performance since she also has to play Shui Ta, the male cousin Shen Te invents in desperation to fend off spongers after the gods set her up in a

tobacco shop. She manages to invest both sides of this split personality with vivid theatrical life.

The other outstanding individual performance comes from Daniel Naddafy as the water-seller, Wang, whose personality fills a big space and directly envelopes the audience.

Generally it's the ensemble work of this eight-strong cast, doubling or trebling in a wide range of picturesque and sometimes Brummie characters, which injects life into this rather dry morality tale.

Director Tom Wright unpacks the show

Brummies put some life into this dry morality tale

from a large red box, which then divides into simple structures on castors which can be wheeled into various positions to create the different locations.

A definite plus is the quality of the cast's singing, with musical director Kevin Stee at the piano in Dominic Muldowney's spare but effective settings – borrowed, presumably, from the National Theatre's 1989 production.

■ Running time: Two hours, 55 minutes.
Until Wednesday.

Terry Grimley