

Here Lies Shakespeare review at Jacksons Lane, London – ‘technically dazzling’



Les Antliacastes Here Lies Shakespeare at Jackson's Lane. Photo: JP Estourne

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by [Dave Hollander](#) - Jan 12, 2017

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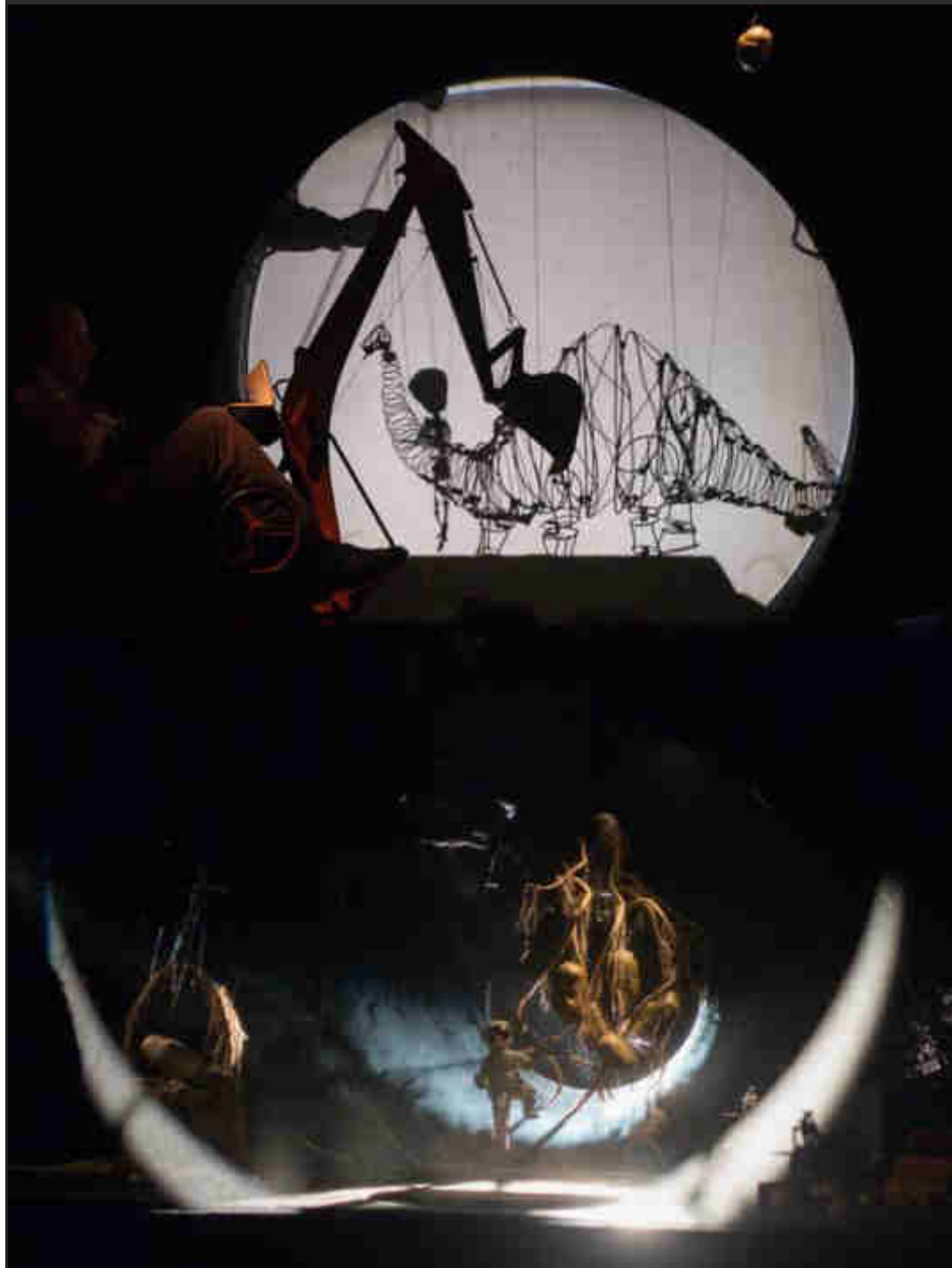
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The skeleton puppet scrabbling in the dirt to unearth potatoes and bones during the prologue to *Here Lies Shakespeare* is a wry summary of its archaeological mission. Loosely based on Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, this piece does not identify an alternative author of Shakespeare's plays and poetry. Rather, it examines his importance within our culture: does it matter that we know so little about him? And if he wasn't the author of these works, does it matter that we believe he was?

Projections, shadow-play and live puppetry are ingeniously combined as a dinosaur's bones are dug up. And with surreal, occasionally scatological humour, a ragtag team of Elizabethan-clad taxidermied creatures dusts off Stratford and turns it into a theme park with a dodo ringing up the till.

Photos: JP Estournet/Marc Mandril Ferarrio

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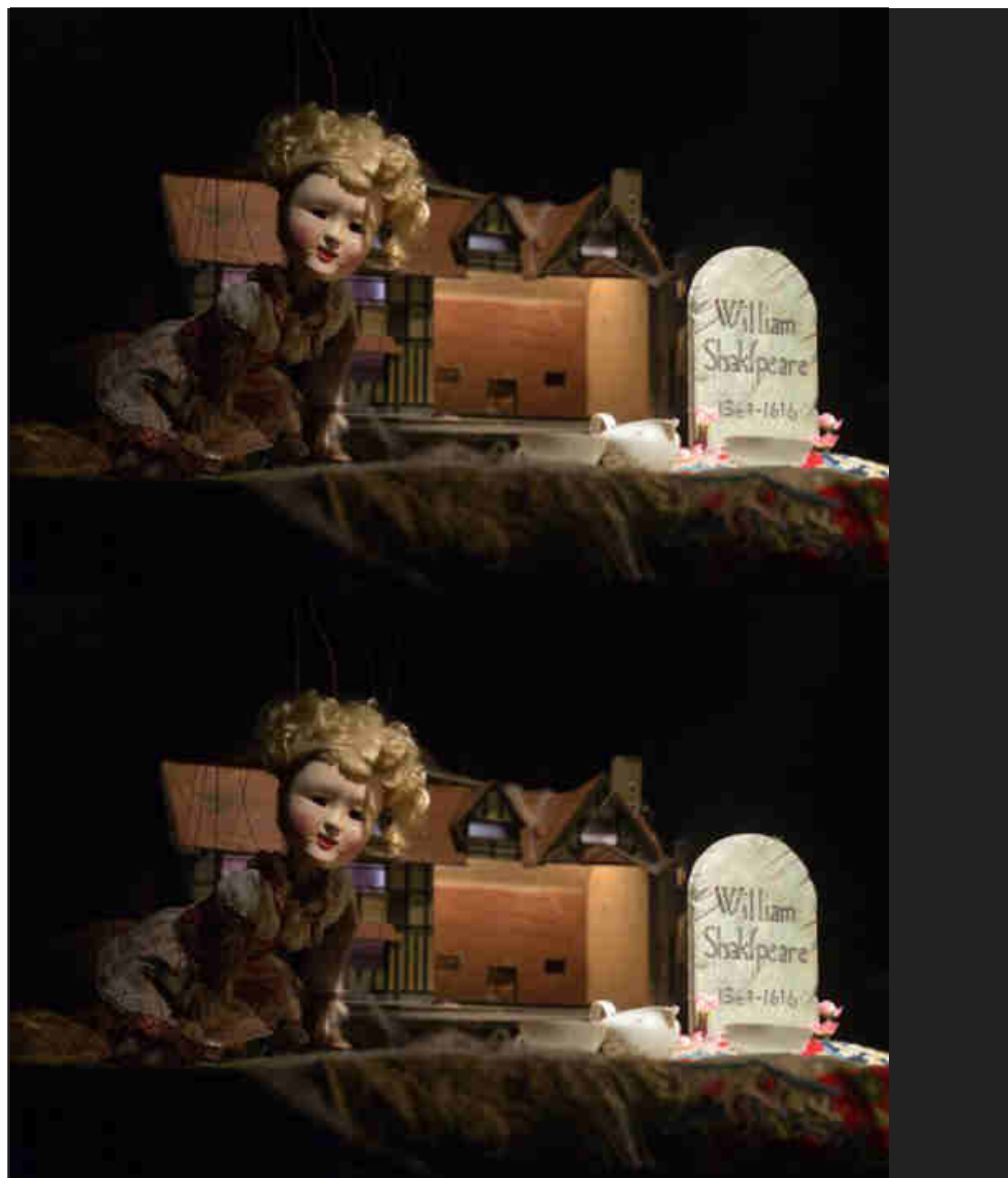


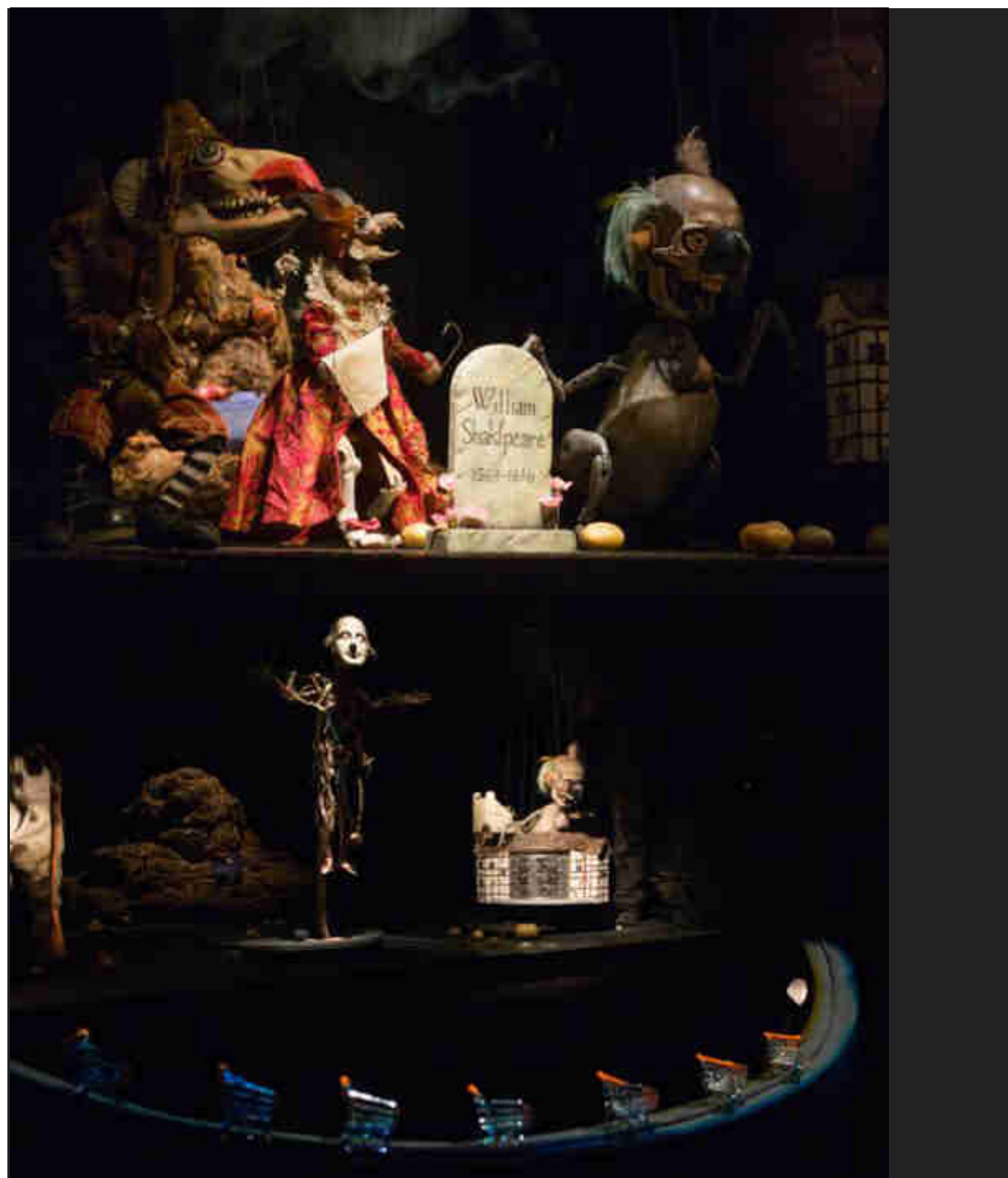


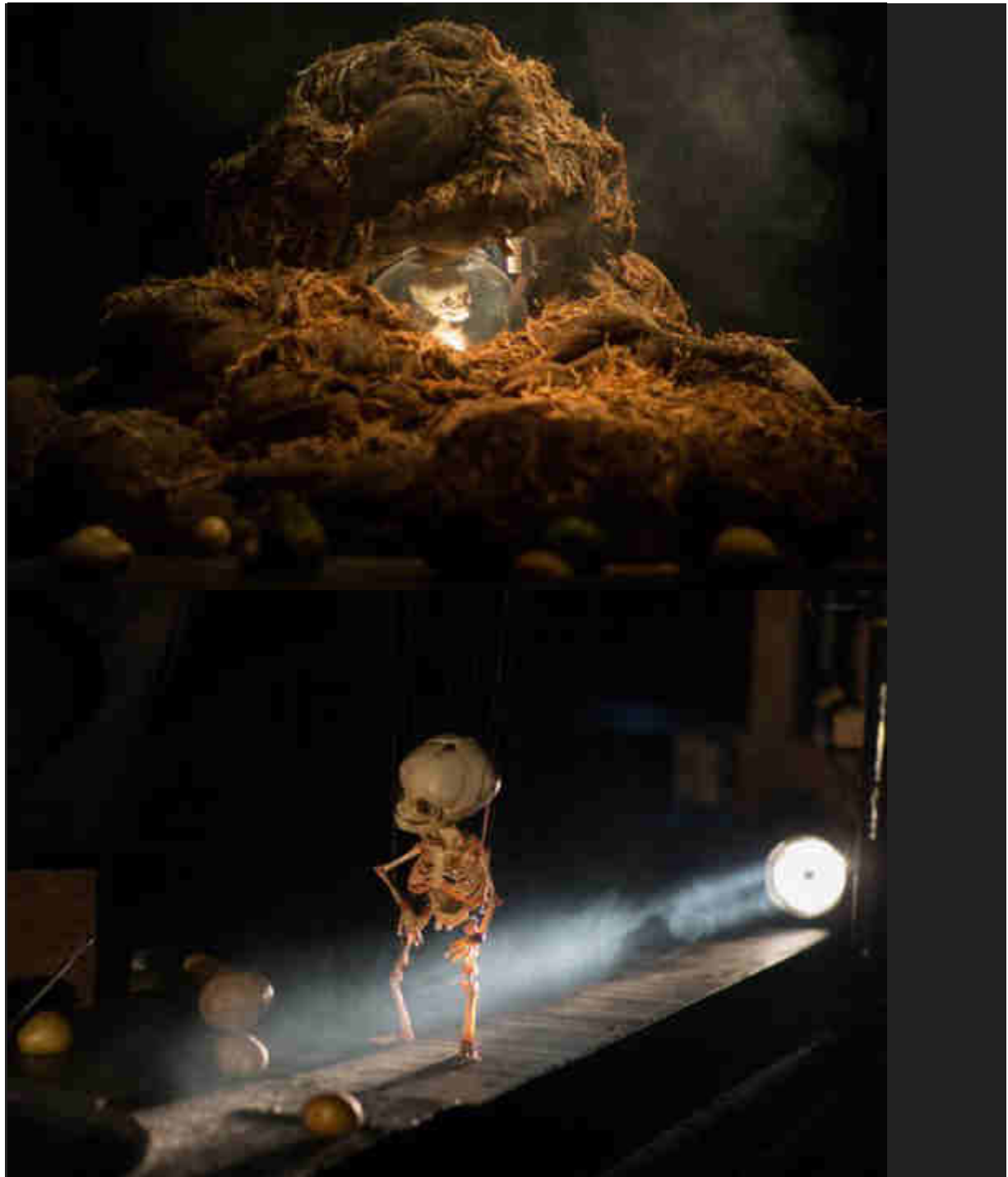


























Arresting images allude to the writer's legacy throughout. Frankenstein's monster feeds Shakespeare's exhumed remains into the mincer as clack-jawed Mr Punch churns out sausages. While Shakespeare writes, multiple hands and a swan grab the quill in succession – until it starts to write by itself. Later, the inside of Shakespeare's head is revealed to be a toothy potato, which croons Are You Lonesome Tonight? into the void.

The eclectic soundtrack encompasses organic sounds, electronica, 16th-century choral music and the obligatory music-box Greensleeves. Voice-overs remind us of the history of the Shakespeare-veneration industry as well as snatches of his most famous lines.

Though highly accomplished, the puppetry occasionally proves too clever for its own good – strings are tangled in the same way as the narrative threads. Despite a rich web of reference, the action often dwells on tangential themes and loses focus. It's certainly thought-provoking, but by the end is our concept of Shakespeare any clearer?

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