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An Age of Angels

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Written and performed by Mark Soper
Guy Masterson and TTI
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The vast majority of one-man shows involve the performer talking to the audience in his/her own or an assumed persona, possibly briefly taking on other characters as they make a more or less brief appearance. Mark Soper eschews this "easy" option: he plays no less than ten different characters, ranging from a little girl to an elementary school "dweeb nerd" with weak bowels to a Los Angeles policeman. They all tell the same story of the incidents that lead up to mass murder, each detailing their own inadvertent part in the building tragedy, and all with nothing more than a simple change of costume and his own versatility as an actor to help him.

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For most of the time we simply don't see where all this is going. In fact, it is very hard to see - at least in the first quarter of an hour or so - just what connection these individuals and their stories have with each other, let alone understand what they are leading to. But gradually the connections emerge and the story unfolds with almost tragic inevitability.

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It's a virtuoso piece, running for an hour and twenty minutes, and requires very careful attention to pacing and this is where, for me, *An Age of Angels* doesn't quite come off, which is why it misses the five star accolade: although the characterisation is excellent and the story unfolds in a fascinatingly subtle way, the dynamics of the performance (essentially the pace and vocal range) are a little too restricted. But it's still a show well worth seeing and a piece of writing to admire.

Peter Lathan