Split Knuckle Theatre are a very talented company, if this devised adaptation of Steinbeck’s The Pearl is anything to go by. I started my reading with Steinbeck; “The Red Pony” was the first novel I ever enjoyed. It has been noted by many that the purpose of his work was to make men understand each other. Steinbeck wrote timeless morality tales, this company have chosen a story which provokes a lot of thought on things Steinbeck to be preoccupied with - things which still trouble us today.

Highlighting the greed of Western so-called “democracy”, assimilation of native culture and the oppression and absolute power of organised religion, this production springs up with so much renewed life and dimension, it adds even more urgency to the issues. Split Knuckle’s polished production is physical and atmospheric and almost completely technology-less, and so truly brings us back to the roots of storytelling.

Kino is a young Bolivian husband and father eager to provide a good life for his infant son. But his son is stung in the shoulder by a scorpion and the continental doctor will not treat a mere pearl diver’s son, so Juana, Kino’s wife prays for him to find the legendary “Pearl Of The World” to pay for the treatment - and he does. Then he finds out about his own human ability to be cruel, ruthless, greedy and violent while being manipulated by others and a paranoid obsession develops. It is not difficult to find the moral in this story but to really be made to think about it takes a special production.

With even the most tiny sound effects and set requirements provided onstage by the performers themselves - using very few props - the production captivates. The religion, the culture and the politics are all represented in various forms - even in the set and the blocking. Apart from oddly Richard Clayderman’s “Ballade Pour Adelaine” being played during seating, the music was very well integrated into the performance and set the atmosphere well.

Most importantly, the performers themselves are each individually endearing - I even had to dry my eyes after the tragic conclusion as Eva Sirp who plays the young mother - Juana - cries her heart out.