

INTO THE WOODS JR MUSICAL

Written By Isma



The classic story of Into the Woods was retold and well - presented by Goldington Academy students at The Place theatre, Bedford on Wednesday 10th and Thursday 11th July with an afternoon matinee performance also on Thursday. The afternoon matinee was enjoyed by Scott Primary School.

The musical focused on the main theme and moral of the story: be careful of what you do and say because children will listen and learn. This was portrayed through the characters: the baker and his wife, Cinderella and Jack.

The set was simple but effective as the characters were given *more focus*. The lighting helped reflect the characters moods and actions. This captivating creative arts event involved not only drama but dance and music. This helped to move the story forward and brought an eerie as well as a lively atmosphere. Lights were centred on specific characters for emphasis such as the use of green and red lights. This was used to highlight danger and evil. For example at one point when the wolves were going to devour Little Red Riding Hood.

The costumes worn by the performers represented their characters and allowed you as an audience member, to feel like you were there in the story with them.

The feeling of sadness and sympathy was well created. For instance when Jack sold his cows to the baker and his wife. This was illustrated through a sad song which signified how he'll 'miss them' and the feelings of loss associated to this.



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The main characters are the baker who played **Alex Felice, (year 9)** and his wife played by **Lexie Gallaher, (year 10)** whose performances were astounding. The use of facial expressions was a great way of representing something bad and good unfolding and both were exceptional in delivering this.

This school production is retold in a professional and creative style where the plot of the witch's curse is put into action through the portrayal of gaining objects to undo the spell. The audience is fascinated with this as they want to discover whether there is a *happily ever after*.

This enchanting tale definitely puts the perspective on the fact that you need to try hard, to achieve what you want. The cast did extremely well in portraying this attribute.

The Year 7 and 8 pupils have created their own art pieces as part of the Into the Woods themed exhibition. These were displayed at the reception of The Place Theatre where audience members who came to see the show were able to observe their creative skills. Altogether this helped to highlight the set, performance themes, characters and moods within the play.

Special thanks to Mr Stratton, Mrs Mahoney, Mrs Lodder and Miss Morgan as well as the drama, dance, art and music students for all their dedication and hard work.

Theatre review of A Disappearing Act

Written by Isma

The Place Theatre, Bedford 2nd April 2019

Starring: Filipa Tomas and Bradley Wayne Smith

This fascinating, enchanting performance of A Disappearing Act by Single Shoe Productions is an absolute recommendation for all. Bradley Wayne Smith plays Brandon and Filipa Tomas plays Nicola as magicians, playing homage to Brandon's father– Phillip Winterbottom, the great magician.

In this performance of remembrance, Brandon and Nicola follow in Phillip's footsteps of magical success through: mind – boggling magic tricks. As an addition witty jokes, dance and interactive audience participation made the piece mystical and charming.

The show was set in a different style and setting from previous theatre shows I have experienced. It started in the lobby where the actors introduced the story with music, as oppose to the stage. The Place Theatre is a homely and welcoming setting and this was perfect for this captivating, close audience entertainment extravaganza. Amazing magic tricks took place which were mind blowing!

Moments of reflections were used to inform the audience what had happened in the past. Props such as lanterns and fans were brought *into play* when the lights were dimmed, to express the unfolding set and tribute. Inspiring quotes were represented to motivate and to keep the remembrance of Philip Winterbottom's accolade alive. One of the most inspiring quotes was, 'find an illusion you can live in, one that makes you believe you're a hero.'

Nicola and Brandon kept you gripped and in awe from start to finish. The performance was a unique way of highlighting Philip Winterbottom's magical tribute through: breath-taking acts of magic, audience engagement, inspirational quotes and storytelling which reinforces magic as an essential *keep safe* for life.

Visit the link below to this review:

<https://findtheplacebackstage.wordpress.com/2019/04/08/review-of-a-disappearing-act-by-isma-begum-14/>

Theatre review of Beauty and the Beast

Written by Isma

The Place Theatre, Bedford, 16th December 2018

Starring: Jake Blake – Butler, Zoe Bullock and Jill Dowse

Beauty and the Beast was a wonderful adaptation by the Lamphouse Theatre based in Peterborough. This was a superb show where music sets the scene told through a story of songs with French accents and humour in between. It was a pleasure to watch.

Three actors narrate, sing and act using creative props to entertain the audience. Nonetheless the actor's character parts were easy to identify as an audience, even though the actors changed roles, voices and personalities.

The show involved: singing/musical instruments, comedy, swift dance movements, storytelling and interactive audience participation. The audience were asked questions and were able to join in with the story, when prompted by the actors.

Puppetry was also used in an imaginative and light – hearted way that brought a smile to my face.

The over-bearing beast in the story was presented in a strong, decisive and intense atmosphere.

B (Belle) was very adventurous, daring and exciting. However the beast was very grumpy and inconsiderate to start off with, but with time he became generous and kind. Despite their differences B and the beast presented the show well together alongside B's mother and the hilarious talking furniture.

I would definitely recommend this show to families and children of all ages; as it was retold in a different way with twists and turns, with scenes and performances that were creative and effective, which captured the story in a new way and gripped the audience.

Theatre Review of The Star seekers at The Place Theatre

Written by Zahid 14th April 2019

The Star Seekers is an imaginative and well presented performance aimed for young children from the ages 3 and above. The Wardrobe Ensemble alongside Wardrobe Theatre both run the show with the tour also being co –presented by house.

This very entertaining play is told through light affects and props that represent the space journey as well as the great spectacles that are seen in space such as a black hole. The three main actors who play many roles namely, Gammo (Jack Drewry), Betty (Jesse Meadows) and Alph (Ben Vardy) guide the audience (the star seekers) through the undiscovered parts of space. A mysterious man called Doctor Doctor sets them a task to recover 3 orbs which would give Earth infinite clear air. It is through this journey in space that we as an audience become star seekers.

It is set within a space station and as everyone walked in at the beginning of the show, the children were asked their names by Betty and Gammo who used star badges to identify each child. This gave a personal touch to the show where the actors asked lots of questions to the *mini star seekers* which revolved around facts about space and its amazing planets.

The performance is very interactive and multi sensory. The audience are involved before the great journey into space as well as during the adventure itself. The mission encounters asteroids, new planets, galaxies, the solar system and beyond. Music is used to show the atmospheric antics of Gammo, Betty and Alph on their travels.

One part of the show involved throwing paper balls at Alph. This definitely got everyone up on their feet and laughing at Alph's reaction when he got hit!

The set was used to show different scenes in the play and the lights were dimmed as well as special affect lights, to convey the beauty of space.

Improvisation enabled the audience to join in and fully engage in this starry expedition of the universe. I would definitely recommend this show to families and children. It lets you become an astronaut, makes you laugh, and gets you thinking about the vacuum of space and its many wonders.



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Northanger Abbey - Review

Written by Alex - 9W

Cyphers Theatre Company brought their extraordinary performance of 'Northanger Abbey' to The Place Theatre, based on the gothic novel by Jane Austen. Set in the early 19th Century in England, the young and naïve "heroine" Catherine Morland visits some family friends in Bath, where she encounters romance, friendship and a better understanding of the world around her after an eventful stay at Northanger Abbey. The story was expertly told by five compelling actors.

From the striking opening where the actors abruptly commanded the stage in an eruption of physical theatre to the simple yet powerful narrative ending, the audience was in their hands as they evoked excitement, laughter, fear and intrigue. As the piece was narrated by the actors throughout, the fourth wall was broken which instigated an intimate atmosphere between actors and audience, enhanced by the use of direct address, often comically. I feel the play possessed the perfect amount of comedic effect; enough to allow a few chuckles from the audience but without distracting from the main mood of the play. For me, the sheer skill of the actors was what made the play so engaging for the audience - multi-roling and stunning characterisation from all actors was used effectively to make the storytelling not only entertaining but extremely believable, and I must commend the portrayal of Mrs Allen which I feel was particularly well stylised. I found myself fascinated throughout, sympathising with Catherine Morland when her search for a trapdoor was awkwardly disturbed by Henry Tilney, disliking Isabella Thorpe with her forceful approach to friendship, and taking pity on Henry when Catherine did not show up on their walk. There were no ostentatious sets or costumes, which was fitting for the production. The set consisted of only some chairs and a rectangular wooden structure used creatively to mimic a range of items: a window, a horse and carriage, a doorway and a bed to name a few. Another feature of the performance I particularly enjoyed was the use of voice. Cyphers really explored the tool of the voice and what moods it can create - for example, the actors not involved in the ballroom dancing scenes created the sound of the ballroom's music, further proving that pretentious music isn't needed to produce a compelling piece of acting. As well as this, a humorous soundscape presenting the horror of the corridor to Catherine Morland's room in the abbey was an extremely clever addition. Although the play was long and did appear to drag on slightly towards the end, the actors carried the story with command, expertise and skill - it was clear they were eager to tell us the story of Catherine Morland and Northanger Abbey. Storytelling at its finest.

Theatre review of The Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster

By Isma

The Place Theatre, Bedford 13th March 2019

The Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster theatre review

Starring: Emily Panes, Tom Blyth and Christopher Birks

Dawn State Theatre Company has come to Bedford's, The Place Theatre with their tour of *The Wonderful Discovery of Witches in the County of Lancaster* by Gareth Jandrell. The emphasis is on the true story of the plight of women, who were seen as witches during the 16th century.

Women who were: not married, poor, who had children out of wedlock and who were from lower working class backgrounds were often seen as witches. Emily Panes plays Jennett Device as the child of one of the witches. The two male actors go on to tell the audience what they believe about witches, through the characters they play. They have clear suspicions about Jennett's grandmother and her role in all the tragedies and deaths in Pendle village.

The Pendle witches were made of three generations: Jennet Device (granddaughter), her mother and grandmother, who were vilified throughout the show. "Witches walk amongst us" was the key message the male characters were signifying. The irony of Jennett Device's role is that she is retelling what she has been through in a forced, tense atmosphere.

Candles were lit to brighten up the "darkness" on the stage. The Pendle witches had a stick figure to represent curses in the practice of witchcraft. This symbolised a sense of status for these women. In particular in the 16th century they had no status because of their backgrounds and upbringing. Women in these times had to keep the injustices they faced, hidden from society. For example hymns and musical instruments such as the violin and banjo were utilised, to bring attention to the chapters of the story. This highlighted the themes of: manipulation, loyalty versus disloyalty, trickery and deception.



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On the whole this performance was heart-breaking. The storyline of the Pendle witch's cycle of "depravities blood", devil worship and being stabbed in the back, left me, as an audience member, with a sense of sadness and sorrow. This show definitely opens your eyes into a world where the discovery of witches, *isn't so wonderful*.

Visit the links below to this review:

<https://thebedfordclanger.com/2019/clanger-citizen-journalist-review-the-wonderful-discovery-of-witches-in-the-county-of-lancaster/>

<https://findtheplacebackstage.wordpress.com/2019/03/21/review-of-the-wonderful-discovery-of-witches-in-the-county-of-lancaster/>

Theatre review of *The Shy Manifesto*

By Isma

The Place Theatre, Bedford 8th February 2019

Introduction

I attended a free theatre writing workshop with The Place Theatre. From doing this, I was able to write a theatre review which gave me the confidence to enter The Place Theatre's review writing competition, which I won in January this year. I'm currently the resident reviewer for the Spring season (review writer 13-16 age bracket). The review below has been published on The Place Theatre website as well as The Bedford Clanger.

The Shy Manifesto theatre review

Starring: Theo Ancient, Harry Potter star (Albus Potter in Harry Potter and the Cursed Child)

Joe C. Brown and Anthony Hollis Productions have brought their tour of this monologue by Michael Ross, directed by Cat Robey, to Bedford's The Place Theatre. The solo play is performed by Theo Ancient (Harry Potter star) who plays the character Callum.

Walking in as an audience member, I found the set and light music playing in the background calming. The blue/orange strobe lighting was used to create atmosphere and highlighted encouragement and peace. The slow, rising, white smoke effects also helped piece together the setting that was about to unfold and made me wonder about what was to come.

As the audience got themselves comfortable, I observed that the character, Callum, was sitting down reading a book (his main passion) and making notes. The simple but effective set stood out and helped tell the monologue. The many different characters he played included: Libby, his parents, Gilby, Naomi, Miss Cherry, Tyrone and the attendees of Gilby's party.

The audience were able to identify the intensity of the character's feelings through the use of balloons, music and the lighting effects. This served to create a gripping, eerie and edgy mood throughout. Props such as a petite bag, multi-coloured scarf, headphones, black sunglasses, small figurines including superheroes and soft toys were used to convey and illustrate each character's personality. It was both imaginative and entertaining, as it really made each character stand out for me. Callum involves the audience throughout by using puns, emotive language and questions for reassurance.



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This soliloquy analyses shyness in today's society, where obsession over social media can lead to further social exclusion due to peer pressure and the need to *fit in*. As a result, Callum actually questions his disposition. However, shyness is also portrayed as a positive characteristic, where Callum gets lost in the world of books and reinforces shyness as a positive attribute. It celebrates shyness on a deeper level, in which the audience have an understanding and acceptance of who Callum is, as he is initially introduced as an enigma.

Overall, the emotional performance of this solo play leaves you wondering, whether Callum found his way in life. It reinforces the attitudes of shyness as new beginnings and is an exceptional performance.

Visit the link below to this review and interview with Theo Ancient at THEPLACEBACKSTAGE (The Place Theatre):

<http://findtheplacebackstage.wordpress.com/2019/02/12/review-of-the-shy-manifesto/>

<https://findtheplacebackstage.wordpress.com/2019/01/31/interview-with-theo-ancient-by-isma-begum/>