



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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INTO THE WOODS

The Gilbert and Sullivan Society of South Australia

The Arts Theatre

Until 29 September 2007

Review by Stephanie Johnson

Richard Trevaskis' "Into The Woods" is no Brothers Grimm go Broadway. His is a brilliant, dark and edgy production that truly showcases the genius of Stephen Sondheim.

This show is brimming with moody, flawed fairy-tale characters, a storybook set that takes on a life of its own and music that captures the light and dark shades of this folkloric tale.

Trevaskis has truly captured the essence of Sondheim's musical – a moral tale based on the teachings of a child psychiatrist who urged us to rise above fairy-floss dross and teach children through stories about the tribulations and triumphs of heroes.

David Lampard has created a truly inspirational set that seems to leap straight out of a fairy-tale book and onto the Arts Theatre stage. The mythical thicket takes on a life of its own with exceptional lighting by Laraine Wheeler. Costumes, also by the talented Lampard, contribute to the enchantment of this tale of a Baker and his wife's quest for a baby. Sondheim has cleverly woven the tales of several storybook characters into one long once-upon-a-time tale.

Mark Oates puts in a stellar performance as the amiable Baker who fights his own demons, and sometimes his wife (Bronwen James) on his journey of discovery. Oates' is never better than in the duet "No More" with his father, played by John Greene.

A fairy tale is not a fairy tale without witches and Tricia Spence relishes her role. It seems that this award-winning performer has a magic touch in whatever role she tackles.

Lampard is an integral part of this show and shines once again on stage in his role as the narrator, which has been cleverly adapted so that the narrator is entwined in this story rather than standing to one side.

One by one Lampard reveals a folkloric cast of talented actors with the diminutive Melissa Hann as the sassy Little Red Riding Hood, Annie Slade as the sweet Cinderella, and Paul Talbot as young Jack. It is a testament to the skills of tall Talbot that he performs a totally believable and enthralling rendition of "Giants in the Sky".

Black and caustic humour is riddled throughout this story and Steve Rudd makes the most of this in his role as the Wolf and Cinderella's Prince. Rudd, with his flamboyant flare for comic timing, is well cast and works well with Andrew Crispe as Rapunzel's Prince, particularly in the duet "Agony".

No-one is alone in creating this folkloric show - the director, musical director (Ross Curtis), designers, sound crew and cast have created a production that deserves to live happily ever after in the minds of all who see it.