INTO THE WOODS  GILBERT & SULLIVAN SOCIETY now at The Arts Theatre through 29 September.

A first-class effort with all cylinders firing to the music of Stephen Sondheim in this clever, if at times confusing, retelling of interwoven fairy tales...primarily Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk and a spacey Rapunzel. The performers, directed by Richard Trevaskis, are all excellent and in fine voice, especially Trish Spence’s bi-polar witch and the two-faced Princes Steve Rudd and Andrew Crispe (who are really knaves). The plot wickedly restores some of the intrinsic darkness inherent in the original stories. for example, the brutal lengths to which the step-sisters resort to try fit into Cindy’s tiny slipper. The set and costumes by David Lampard are a visual delight and the music under the baton of Ross Curtis is lively and pleasant.

The show lacks a memorable tune to hum on your way home but that’s true of most musicals today, sadly. Still, Into the Woods is a truly fun outing for young and old.