



Review: The Fir Tree

Artsdepot, North Finchley
 By Ciara Doyle,
 aged 11

I was so lucky to be invited to see the first show of *The Fir Tree* at the Artsdepot. It's based on a story by Hans Christian Andersen, who also wrote *The Little Mermaid* and *The Ugly Duckling*, so I already knew it was going to be a good story.

As I took my seat the first thing I noticed was how interesting the set looked. There were lots of musical instruments on the stage, so it gave the audience a clue about what the play was going to be like.

The three actors came out and it was such a unique experience from the start! The character of the Fir Tree was a



Unique experience: The hard-working cast of *The Fir Tree* perform with puppets and instruments to bring their interactive and inclusive story to life

little tree with one of the actors voicing and moving it. It was so brilliant to see how they made the tree come to life.

Sound effects

I absolutely loved the sound effects; the actors crunched dry leaves and tinsel when a hare jumped on the tree and

plopped their hands in water when a stork came along. Also, the amount of instruments that were played live by the actors was amazing. They played harmonicas, violins, guitars, flutes, accordions... name an instrument and they played it!

The fact that there were only

three actors throughout the play but they played so many parts and did so many different things was really impressive.

I also absolutely loved the songs, especially the Fir Tree singing about how it wants to be big. A particularly funny part in the play was when the Fir Tree

finally got picked to play a part in 'Chrinchmas'. The actors played the characters of young children during that part of the play and they were so funny.

Overall, *The Fir Tree* was an amazing play with a really lovely message and I would definitely recommend seeing it.

How we make theatre for everyone

Here, Eva Sampson, director of *The Fir Tree*, explains her inclusive approach to the theatre experience in her *How It Ended* company.

We know that going to the theatre can sometimes feel like a stressful experience and we're passionate about making work that feels as inclusive and accessible as possible.

This show has been designed for *everyone* to enjoy, and we've approached the storytelling in the exact same way we would any production. But when setting levels particularly technically with Lighting and Sound, we're programming these sensitively with neurodiverse audiences in mind. So there are no sudden,

flashing lights or sudden loud sound effects. During the show the lights will never go completely out, and the audience can leave the auditorium at any time. We want our audiences to feel relaxed and they're free to move around the auditorium if they'd like to, and make noise! We believe all producers of family theatre should consider creating a relaxed environment for their audiences, and with only a few adjustments and considerations, we can share the magic of theatre in a safe space.



Relaxed audiences: Director Eva Sampson

Winter warmer

A reminder that the Grange Big Local team are hosting a Warm Space at the Tarling Road Community Centre, Fallows Close, N2, every week until the end of March. Free and open to all, there will be coffee and activities like arts and crafts, talks and gardening. Parents and carers are encouraged to drop in after the school run to make new friends. The sessions run from 9.30am to 12pm every Thursday morning from 9 January to 27 March. Find out more by emailing info@grangebiglocal.org

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