



STEP Young Critics Programme 2008

Welcome to the STEP Young Critics Programme 2008

The STEP Young Critics Programme 2008 has given young people from two schools in Southwark the chance to work with a professional journalist (Andrew Dickson, The Guardian and Heather Neill, The Stage) to learn how to be a theatre critic. Participants in the Programme were also given the chance to attend a talk given by Michael Billington (The Guardian) and see at least one show at a STEP partner theatre (Oval House Theatre, Unicorn Theatre, Union Theatre and Half Moon Young People's Theatre)

This was a real chance for the young people to develop their writing skills, learn to be critical observers and interact with industry professionals. They were also given the chance to tell the theatres what they think of the shows which are created with them in mind.

This guide features reviews by students at
The Harris Academy, Bermondsey

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Special thanks also to the theatres involved in the Programme and Heather, Andrew and Michael for their commitment to the young people who may be the next generation of theatre critics.



Red Fortress

Unicorn Theatre

18 Oct - 8 Nov 2008

Mayowa Sofekun

Martyr or suicide? - Depends whose side you're on in this matter. Suicide: the intentional taking of one's own life. Martyr: a person who is put to death or endures great suffering on behalf of their religion. This was the controversial issue that took place over 517 years ago in Granada, Southern Spain. That provokes the question: if you were not to denounce your religion; are you indirectly committing suicide? ...

The play *Red Fortress* is set in an era where Islam, Judaism and Christianity were conflicting religions - the time of the crusades. The time where each religion thought their own was the one true religion and the time where each religion considered any other as infidels.

The story starts when each young character is on their individual pilgrimage. There is Rabia (Gehane Strehler), a Muslim girl, Iago (John Cockerill), a Christian boy and Luis (Jack Blumenau), who is a Jewish boy. Rabia is trying to get by with her mother by selling books. With her father gone, the responsibility is

hers, to dress as a boy and sell in a patriarchal society of 1491.

Iago. A boy. A Christian. A refugee. Forced out of his home by an invasion. With no food, no water and no money how can he and his family possibly survive?

Luis is a boy who contrasts greatly: a 15th century teenage boy but also a 21st century stereotypical boy. A polyglot, who strives to do well in engineering, whereas his father wants him to do well in medicine. But, maybe his father knew best, as he fails to realise what he with his engineer's brain has created... a war machine.

Though their worlds are different, their problems are the same. They all strive to do what they do best, and live in a world where no one is cast out for their differences. Be it a bookseller, a refugee or an engineer. But will this love triangle be able to survive in a century where a caste system is in place? With Muslims on top, Jews in the middle and Christians on the bottom. Can each religion kill in the name of Allah, Jehovah and Hashem? God...

Loyalty, friendship and love are put to the test in an adventure of discovery, disguise, passion and betrayal. Then; the smell of the atmosphere changes, there's gunpowder in the air... Go and inhale this exhilarating experience.

Sixteen Up

Unicorn Theatre

12 - 22 Nov 2008

Rhianne Spencer

Sixteen Up is about two young lovers, Adam [Lloyd Thomas] and Evie [Elizabeth Cadwallader].

They were sixteen years old and everything was just fine but they wanted to take their relationship to the next step. They decided that they wanted to make a commitment to each other by making love; it didn't go according to plan. This led them to a little bit of a fall out which then led them to a break up. After some time they each found new partners but it was obvious they still had great love for each other. At Evie's seventeenth birthday party they bump into one another...

They used very strong poetic language to express their feelings for one another which is language that we would not use today.

Elizabeth Cadwallader used voices and accents to play three very different people with very different personalities. The actors could relate to the audience very well with their strong emotions. I could really grasp on to what they were feeling

inside. The music was powerful: it connected with the atmosphere around us which really moved me. I was surprised when tears were springing to my eyes! You could see they were dangerously in love at such a young age. The musician was on stage throughout the whole performance, but he helped the actors to set the mood; sometimes it was hilariously funny and sometimes it was very serious.

You could also see the different scenes from their different costumes, I could figure out what they were doing and where they were going. The lighting and effects were excellent you always knew when to be quite quiet. The light boxes were helpful because they showed different animations which related to how they, Adam and Evie, felt or what they were talking about. It was a really simple set but used in a very complicated way.

I would recommend you to go and see this play because I guarantee you it will be worth your time and money. If I had another chance to watch this I would take it with no hesitation!

lone Woodburn

Sixteen up is about a girl called Evie (Elizabeth Cadwallader) and a boy called Adam (Lloyd Thomas) who are in love with each other....

When they are sixteen they have a bit of trouble in the bedroom when they try to make love but because they are not ready for such commitment they get embarrassed by this incident which causes them to break up. But then towards the end they make up.

After a while they move on and find new partners. One day when Adam and Evie are out with their partners they both bump into each other. I liked this bit of the play because instead of using real actors to play their partner they used puppets.

In the beginning of the play they are both sixteen and they are not really mature. They are too scared to express their feelings towards each other but when they are seventeen we see a change: they are both mature. Their appearance suggests they've grown up and they express themselves more to each other which they never done before.

Some of the language they use is typical of children. They also use a lot of rhyming words which I really liked because when I write poems I like using rhyming words. When they speak it is as if they are relating their love for each other, as if they are two butterflies in love.

The scenery is very good and there is a lot of music. The singer (who sits at the edge of the stage) has a really good voice and he makes the play more effec-

tive. There is dancing which is very entertaining and made the audience laugh at times.

The lighting is very good and effective: some scenes go dark and that makes the audience think what's happening. There is colour too: when they talk about death the lighting goes red and when they talk about butterflies a picture of a butterfly appears on the screen at the back of the Unicorn Theatre.

Some of the scenes are quite emotional and towards the end I wanted to cry because the actors made it seem so real. Elizabeth Cadwallader who played Evie was really good at acting because she put on different accents when she was playing another character. Lloyd Thomas made it so believable when Adam was angry and at times I got scared.

But when the play was finishing I wanted to watch it again because it was fantastic and I really enjoyed myself. If I was asked if I wanted to watch it again I would say yes.

Brooke O'Connor

Sixteen Up was about two sixteen year olds that were in love, but were not meant to be together. They were supposed to be in love, but scared of a relationship at their age. But at times I got the impression that they didn't really love

each other that much. However at the end, they did remind me of two people that were supposed to be together.

The two young people were called Adam and Evie, which reminds me of Adam and Eve, the world's first lovers. These two young people were afraid of a relationship so young. However, Evie was more relaxed about it, but Adam wasn't really ready for it to progress.

Adam and Evie split up. They each got new partners, and didn't meet again until Evie's seventeenth birthday. They ended up alone, and Adam said he needed to know whether they were permanently so, or if they had another chance.

At the end, they got back together, and were stronger than before, ready this time at seventeen.

Their acting was effective at times, but as they were two adults playing sixteen year olds, it wasn't fully believable. I think it would have been better to have a younger actor and actress. Although they did quite well at playing young people, it wasn't always convincing.

It was quite funny when they were using some slang and words teenagers use, but at the same time, it didn't sound right with their older appearance. However, with them behaving the way some teenagers do, it makes it appealing to people of that age group.

Sometimes the play was confusing, like for example, when they got new partners, and met again. The reason why it confused me was because there were only two cast members and so they had to say the parts of other characters when they rarely came in. On this occasion I didn't understand.

There was a live singer on stage, and when he did sing in some parts, it did seem appropriate to what was going on, like when music plays in a film. It was believable, and suited well with the scenes.

The design of the clothing, at the beginning didn't remind me of sixteen year olds, they made them seem older, and the other outfit they wore made them look like they were going somewhere where they needed to dress smart. And again made them look older than sixteen.

The lighting went well with different scenes, sometimes going lighter, and sometimes being lighter. It was appropriate the way it was set out, and made an effect on the emotions they were feeling.

I would recommend anyone that wants to see adults attempt to act sixteen, and show what can happen in a young relationship, to watch it, it's funny.

Lisa-Marie Mahid

Sixteen Up at the Unicorn Theatre is about a boy and a girl, both 16, who are about to share their first sexual encounter. The boy, Adam (Lloyd Thomas), is going through a stage of wondering whether or not he is ready to have sex. Then there's Evie (Elizabeth Cadwalader), who shares his insecurities.

I think that the play was exciting and presented a real life situation. I loved the way both actors had multiple characters. And to express the different characters coming to life, they changed the directions of the way they were facing.

For those people who like to see a visual spectacle, the set for this performance was endlessly engaging. There were two white screens and behind the screens different colour lights were shining to express the mood of their characters (colourful projections). For example when there was a lot of tension and talk about blood red lights were shone onto the screen.

The language sometimes used rhyme as Adam thought that Evie liked it. It was funny at times as well as sad, as the multiple characters played by both actors could be complete opposites.

Adam's monologue really just paints a picture of him: the teen that is so clearly confused! Then his other character is his

dad! The man who is everybody's typical dad. 'Should I call mum?' he asks, while Adam is locked in his bedroom. Can't do anything for himself, has to call mum!

But Evie's monologue is far more amusing as she mimics a fast-talking Liverpool lass then the teeth-kissing south-Londoner. But this isn't enough to hide her confusion.

The atmosphere is topped off with a cherry: the onstage musician! It just finishes off a Brilliant Play with the music. Ben Hales was playing the guitar with a tambourine at his feet, for the off beats. He was on stage the whole time, playing low key, so you could just about hear it.

If you have a chance to go and see this play, I would totally recommend it! It is a highly energetic, exciting, funny piece that you would not want to miss!

Reviews of Films

Sweeney Todd

Aysha Begum

Sweeney Todd is a horrific musical thriller based on one man's vengeance. This film is throat cuttingly great although it is definitely not for the faint hearted. Tim Burton has superbly adapted Stephen Sondheim's stage show.

After Judge Turpin (Alan Rickman) sent away Benjamin Barker for a crime which he never committed, Benjamin Barker returns to Victorian London adopting a new name Sweeney Todd (Johnny Depp). With the help of a young sailor Anthony Hope he has sailed back home to seek revenge.

Sweeney Todd opens a barber's shop, in Fleet Street, above Mrs Lovett's (Helena Bonham Carter) meat pie shop, where she sells the worst pies in London. With her loyal help Todd starts to seek his revenge and is hoping to be reunited with his daughter Johanna who has been imprisoned by his sworn enemy, Judge Turpin. He then finds out that his wife has died.

Charming the public, his victims, with his smile he lures customers in for a treatment which ends it all.

Johnny Depp is not the best singer I admit but he did do a good job with the acting. I think the producers should have got a professional singer to do the singing parts and left the acting to him. He really scared me when he used his bloody sharp razors.

Helena Bonham Carter did a very good job with the singing; she is way better than Depp considering both are actors. I really liked her character because she was very mischievous, funny and quite scary at the same time. She did play the part very well; she could sing and act at the same time.

Alan Rickman is the worst singer in the film. He has a gloomy, lazy, deep voice that just ruins it all. The producers should have got another actor who would be great playing the part but sing just as well. I think if they were to use Rickman as the character he should have had a professional to do the singing parts and got tips from the theatre performers.

I think the designers have done a fantastic job on the scenery and costumes. The costumes seemed perfect for Victorian London and the scenery looked great. I really didn't see the point of putting *Sweeney Todd* under the category of 18. Anyway who cares? I've watched it already and I loved it. It is possibly one of the best films I've seen so far.

The Greatest Story in the World

Jahanara Begum

Living rough on the streets of London, Geraldine and her two daughters, Livvie, played by Elizabeth Earl and Angeline, played by Holly Earl, are struggling when their caravan blows up; they need to find another place to live. They were given a temporary housing accommodation at first, but the conditions were horrendous and agonizing. As expected, Geraldine, played by Dervla Kirwan, reacts swiftly. The family soon agree to become residents of the best department store in London, Scottley's. They must maintain it a secret from doorman Brian, played by Peter Capaldi (whom the girls label Mr. Whiskers) and a team of clumsy thieves who want to steal from the store safe full of its jewels.

I thought this film was excellent. It was full of drama and a suitable film for the whole family to view. It was a feast of laughter and enjoyment assorted with tears and grief. I think the director, Jane Prowse, did a fabulous job as the whole film was put together to a standard which made the film feel so real. And look out for the happy ending.

Camp Rock

Shakila Shammy

Well, to start with *Camp Rock* is a film made by Disney. It is a bit like High school musical but *its* better. It's more entertaining and has the music that we teenagers like to listen to. The Jonas Brothers star in this fun and entertaining film.

Camp Rock basically centres on a teenage girl called Mitchie Torres (Demi Lovato) who is desperate to go to a camp called Camp Rock for her summer holidays. This is a place where you can find all your skills in singing and song writing. But she can only attend if she helps her mum the cook of Camp Rock. When she is overheard, but not seen by teen pop star Shane Gray (Joe Jonas). He sets out to find the girl with the voice. Meanwhile Mitchie (Demi Lovato) has to step out of her fears and tell everyone who she really is.

Well I think it is better than *High School Musical* because it's not like Gabriella (Vanessa Hagens) running away and then Troy (Zac Efron) running after her to comfort her. *Camp Rock* is mostly about what real teenagers like us do to get to what we love to do in our lives.

The acting of Mitchie Torres (Demi Lovato) was very convincing and it made

me feel she was the actual character. I also think she was a good liar in the film.

Some parts are funny such as when Mitchie is in the kitchen and she puts her hat on. When Shane Gray comes in she hides and finds some flour to hide her face. He can hear her rustling about under the table and says "I hear you". Then Mitchie gets up. Shane jumps when he sees that Mitchie is covered in flour.

For more details on the theatres and theatre companies involved in the STEP Young Critics Programme 2008 please contact:

Box Clever Theatre

020 7357 0550 / admin@boxclevertheatre.com

www.boxclevertheatre.com

Half Moon Young People's Theatre

Box Office: 020 7709 8900

www.halfmoon.org.uk

Oval House Theatre

Box Office: 020 7582 7680

www.ovalhouse.com

Unicorn Theatre

Box Office: 020 7645 0560

www.unicorntheatre.com

Union Theatre

Box Office: 020 7261 9876

www.upandcoming.webeden.co.uk

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STEP 2008-2009

STEP creates many opportunities for Southwark's young people to access theatre and drama activities across the borough.

The 2008 Festival, *STEP Forward*, which the Young Critics Programme 2008 is part of, has enabled young people in Southwark to access activities in their schools and local theatre venues. This year's Festival showcased the way in which theatre and performing arts activities are key to developing and progressing, moving forward and moving on.

Young People living and attending school in Southwark can get more involved in STEP by joining the STEP Youth Forum - this is a chance to see more theatre performances in Southwark venues and attend workshops delivered by youth theatre practitioners. It is also a chance to help organise STEP activities and have a say on the youth theatre on offer in Southwark.

For more information on STEP initiatives please contact:

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