

Venue

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Review Recycled Stockings

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Southville Centre, Bristol (Tue 20-Thur 22 Dec)

THEATRE 'Recycled Stockings' is the latest offering from Show of Strength, the theatre company directed by Sheila Hannon that has been presenting community theatre experiences in and around Bristol since their formation in 1986. This Christmas show is designed specifically for young children, and at £5 a head, it could hardly fail to be a hit.

Set in the promenade, the audience are split into three parts and are sent off to see three actors performing mini monologues in three separate spaces inside the Southville Centre. At the end of each eight-minute monologue, the audience are escorted around the building, in search of another helping. Show of Strength have a fondness for using this kind of format, and it's easy to see why. With the cunning use of a central interval, it means that the audience are given a total of six micro monologues, and, equally, six writers are given as many opportunities to captivate kids with their work. Also, there is no time for tots to get uncomfortable or restless before another Christmas cracker is popped open before them.

The performance that stood out the most was from Kate McNab, who portrayed an aged Cinderella recounting her story, stripped of the magic, in its place revealing a more plausible version of her escape from rags to riches. The kids were enthralled by her retelling of the events, and equally by the revelation that she now looked like a granny. Another surprise success was provided by Knobby the hard nut Chavy, which saw a disgruntled reindeer pipe on about his jealousy for Rudolf. Actress Nadia Williams made the part come alive, and the kids loved the naughty realism of Knobby's sibling-style jealousy.

Although there is no theme to connect the performances, the actors are each kitted out as a familiar fairytale persona, which means that the audience has some understanding of the character before them as soon as they start to speak. This use of the familiar contextualizes each of the monologues, and makes it easier for the kids to understand the jokes and references. This alone means that even the little ones are involved and included in a sympathetic way, right from the start, and certainly contributes to the overall success of this show.



Adriana Dorsett