Theatre arts review

Talented young cast brings Mary and her Secret Garden to life

The Secret Garden
Mill Studio, Guildford
Yvonne Arnaud Youth Theatre
Rating: ★★★★★

THIS favourite story tells of orphaned Mary leaving the vibrancy and colour of India to live with her indifferent uncle in cold, grey Yorkshire.

It covers the change in her from a neglected, spoilt, angry child into a positive, warm and delighted young person – a tall order to reproduce in an hour on the stage.

But one should never doubt the skill of the Yvonne Arnaud Youth Theatre team to motivate and inspire its talented ensemble of 15 young actors to do justice to such an undertaking – a marvellous experience, surely, for both audience and performers alike.

There was beautiful, haunting music enhancing the atmosphere, used to depict the joy Mary, Dickon and Colin felt in their 'Secret Garden,' written and played by David Perkins, musical director, and sung beautifully by Kalyane Warren.



Tilly Bradley stars as Mary in The Secret Garden. **Picture: Carmela Amaddio**

Mary's first 'friend,' of course, was the robin. He led Mary into the Secret Garden, and popped up everywhere, head tilted, looking at her, as robins will, whenever she appeared there to tend it.

All cast members who handled the robin's appearances with tenderness and delicacy should be congratulated.

Mary (Tilly Bradley) was first shown kindness by her Yorkshire maid, Martha (Esme Hough).

Martha's brother, Dickon (Ted Hayes) became Mary's great friend and guide in the ways of the wild world and of gardening.

All Yorkshire cast members held their accents remarkably well.

Thus was Mary transformed, becoming a caring, encouraging friend to her 'sickly' cousin Colin, discovered in the far reaches of the house. Colin (Theo Burns) soon rose from his wheelchair, becoming stronger by the day.

Finally, Uncle Archibald came to see the transformation of the dead space of his deceased wife's Secret Garden into a flourishing, living one, thanks to the three young friends.

The simple, yet so effective set – iron gate panels, with the garden itself emerging from a few suitcases – will come into its own when the production appears at the Edinburgh Fringe this month.

Director Lucy Betts said: "We have spent our rehearsal process playing and creating something rather lovely – we hope you agree."

We do, Lucy. Thank you. The atmosphere you and your team created lingers on.

Pauline Surrey

Plenty to entertain with a host of activities on offer

MUSIC, henna tattoos and Bollywood dancing are some of the events all the family can get involved with at this year's Godalming Staycation.

The annual programme of events kicks off tomorrow (Saturday) at the Phillips Memorial Park with the two-day Staycation Live



Engaging, funny and witty, Glenn is a Star Inn star

Glenn Moore: *Glengarry Glen Glenn*
Star Inn, Guildford
Rating: ★★★☆☆

STAND-UPS come in all shapes and sizes. When it's Glen Moore, it's a slim six foot three and he brought his particular brand of self-denigrating humour to the back room of The Star last Friday as part of Guildford Fringe.

His is a middle class, middle of the road, middle brow show which is funny without being foul-mouthed and witty without being impenetrable.

Unlike many stand-ups, he doesn't target the audience. Instead he talks about himself.

He was brought up in 'a strange, remote village,' which turns out to be Hurstpierpoint in Sussex (a village whose very name offers countless opportunities for humour, which were not explored).

There's more than a whiff of Hugh Grant about Glen. He has an engaging personality.

Being a loser will always get the audience on your side and this lad is a grade A loser. No girl, no friends, no job. What he does have, in shedfuls, is low self-esteem.

You can't help liking him. His delivery is machine gun fast, reminding me of Ben Elton. The content, however, is far removed from that comic icon.

You'll look in vain for cutting edge satire, for politics, for current affairs. Glen's humour centres on his life or, more precisely, his lack of one.

Stand-up is the hardest job in showbiz. To keep an audience engaged and laughing for an hour is as difficult as trying to stuff an eel into a small milk pan. And if Glen Moore's act never generated gales of unbridled mirth, it certainly kept us smiling and laughing in a Hurstpierpoint sort of way.

Margaret Burgess

Auction News

around the salerooms