

Serious play is full of humour

REVIEWS

Five Marys Waiting
The Hostry

"If the Lord is watching, the least we can do is be entertaining," says one of the characters in Five Marys Waiting – and while I can't speak for God, the audience definitely found them to be.

This staged reading of a new play by David Banks dropped in on a meeting of five women in Jerusalem a decade after the death of Jesus, a gathering including Jesus' mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene.

This play is serious – with the shadow of religious persecution constantly hanging over it – but also surprisingly funny. While the dialogue occasionally lapses a little too much into reciting scripture, these are real women artfully drawn and portrayed. It deals sensitively with the difference between Jesus as man and myth – the boy growing up, a mother's son, a tempestuous hot headed rebel and the serene, peaceful and just fountainhead; the differences between those proselytising after the event, and those that knew him personally. It is a thought-provoking and entertaining play, and Norwich was lucky to have its premiere.

James Goffin

FESTIVAL FUN: Norwich Puppet Theatre director and puppeteer, Joy Haynes, introduces Thumbelina to Alicia Fortini, aged six, as the Theatre puts on a production at the Hostry Festival.



Picture: DENISE BRADLEY

Children get creative at puppet workshop

Children got creative at Norwich Cathedral this weekend when they learnt how to make elaborate puppets. As part of the Hostry Festival, which is a celebration of the arts in Norfolk, 10 children were treated to a practical puppet-making session after the performance of

Thumbelina run by the Norwich Puppet Theatre's director and puppeteer, Joy Haynes.

The children made puppet fish, who in the story help Thumbelina escape a toad who captures her. Libby Waite, from the Puppet Theatre, on Whitefriars in Norwich, said the

workshop teaches the children how to make realistic puppets.

She said: "It also helped the children interact with the story of Thumbelina."

The workshop runs as a final stage of the Hostry Festival, held at the Cathedral's hostry from October 26 until November 4.

Skilful shows were pure joy

REVIEWS

Thumbelina
The Hostry

There can be something joyfully simple about puppetry that hides the tremendous expertise of doing it well.

Norwich Puppet Theatre's Joy Haynes bought both those sides to the Hostry Festival's performance of Thumbelina.

Based on the classic Hans Christian Andersen tale, this intricately-crafted yarn follows its tiny heroine as she journeys around the world, meeting new friends – and some foes.

Haynes is a master storyteller both as narrator and puppeteer, using rod, glove and shadow puppets (plus a great slab of imagination) to put us alongside Thumbelina at every stage of her adventure.

It worked delightfully in the intimate surroundings of the Hostry, and deserved a bigger audience.

The same is true of the preceding show, Tilly the Talespinner and Obee Joyful, who entertained with silly tales about trying to make the miserable King Cuthbert smile. Mixing song, slapstick and audience participation, this was a perfectly fun show to lift the spirits on a drab afternoon.

James Goffin

NORWICH

Festival is a success story

ROSA MCMAHON

A 10-day celebration of the arts in Norfolk came to a close against the historic backdrop of Norwich Cathedral.

The finale of The Hostry Festival last night marked the end of the event's second year after its successful debut last year.

The festival, sponsored by The Eastern Daily Press, was held at the cathedral's hostry.

Founded by Stash Kirkbride, Peter Barrow, Peter Beck and Rebecca Chapman, the festival highlights creativity in Norfolk, with more than 90pc of the programme sourced from the county.

Mr Kirkbride, the festival's artistic director, said he was moved by the commitment of the 100 volunteers, adding that an aim was to make volunteers "fly".

He said: "Everyone has gone the extra mile.

"I feel proud and happy with what we have achieved.

"We don't come here to make careers, it's all about returning to creativity and being creatively fulfilled."

He added: "We have really struck on something here, a festival which is all to do with Norfolk, it's a community project."

Mr Kirkbride co-wrote a sequel to Shakespeare's Hamlet with co-

HOSTRY FESTIVAL

Media Partners: Eastern Daily Press

Picture: DENISE BRADLEY



PROUD AND HAPPY: Artistic director of the Hostry Festival, Stash Kirkbride.

producer Peter Beck, called Hamlet: The Undiscovered Country, which was performed at the festival.

As well as that, before each of the five Hamlet performances, the inclusive theatre company, Total Ensemble, performed pieces exploring themes from the Bard's tragic masterpiece.

For younger audiences, Thumbelina was performed by Norwich Puppet Theatre, and Literary fans were treated to an afternoon with Norfolk authors Simon Gough, Sarah Ridgard, Elspeth Barker, Dennison Smith, Doug Stroggins, Stash Kirkbride and Peter Beck.

And the Norfolk Arts Awards in association with the EDP was a new addition to the festival line-up, which is set to be an annual event.

It celebrates the rich creative talent in Norfolk, as well as incorporating the EDP's People's Choice Award.

Plans for next year's festival are already taking shape, with the organisers looking for more sponsors.

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