

Brighton & Hove Free Press

Theatre Review: Vampirates @ Brighton Pavilion Theatre 25/09/11

Directed by Gavin Robertson - Produced by Scene Productions & Company Gavin Robertson
Starring David Sayers, Katharine Hurst, Stuart Walker

I had two tickets for Vampirates, showing at the Brighton Pavilion Theatre (25/09/11) and I have to admit I wasn't expecting much. I mean three actors playing a plethora of parts which include to name but a few a Chinese Pirate, (Katharine HURST) an Vampire Irish midshipman, (Stuart WALKER) a banker called Buzby (David SAYERS) and a female pirate with the wonderful name of Cutlass Cate (Katharine HURST).

Not only that but there was minimal scenery and very few props, my expectations hit an all-time low but looks can be very deceptive as I was about to find out. As the lights went down and Katharine, David and Stuart came on stage and began to sing a sea shanty I was immediately drawn into a strange new world.

The world of Connor, (Stuart WALKER) his twin sister Grace (Katharine HURST) and a brand new life on the high seas with pirates, a masked vampire Captain (David SAYERS) who keeps his crew under control with a weekly blood "feast", a snake called Scrimshaw whose home is a Pirate Captain's Hair (David SAYERS) and a delicious Vampire villain (David SAYERS) who claims to have known Julius Cesar.

I watched in awe as a large piece of flimsy plastic was used to great effect when the twin's boat is sunk in a storm and they are flung into the ocean. This swirling plastic became the raging sea that parts the twins from each other; this was imagination with a salty bite that worked amazingly well.

And then there were three large trunks which became doors, the bow of a ship, a boat, cupboards, even a dining table. And who would have thought that three metal coat racks could become such effective windows, railings for stairs, and even a graveside? But the ultimate use of a single prop surely has to go a sturdy orange box that was used as the 312 steps to a lighthouse. Ingenious.

David, Katharine and Stuart were seamless in their many guises on stage. All three actors jumped from character to character with ease, not an easy feat when you have to go from being a teenage girl to a sword wielding woman pirate, and a doting father to an odious banker.

And the battle scene has to be seen to be believed, it was one of my favourite moments.

There was little in the way of special effects too though the background music was just right and the low lighting certainly helped create a creepy atmosphere all the way through the performance.

This play is an absolute little gem that needs to be seen by young and old alike. I would recommend it to anyone from 8+; in fact I would recommend it to adults as well because it has some subtle humour in parts of its dialogue.

The little girl sitting behind me with her Dad told me after the show that she had loved every single minute of it even though it did make her jump and grab hold of her father on several occasions!

My only complaint is that there was no intermission but I will happily give it my ultimate seal of approval. I held off going to the loo as I didn't want to miss a single moment, and for a diabetic with a dodgy bladder let me tell you, that really makes this play well worth going to see...