

The Beauty of Sleeping Wood - December 2008

Jamie, the kitchen boy, can't speak: his voice has been stolen by a Bad Fairy. But as we gather outside SYT's studio theatre, Jamie's eager to make us welcome in his make-believe world - so he shakes hands with us. And not in any pretend way either. Tots, grown-ups we're all included. It's so relaxed, one wee boy remarks that Jamie's hands are "awful cold". Prince Frank arrives. Recognises Jamie (Euan Patterson) as his childhood friend and soon another piece of the preparatory jigsaw falls, oh-so-conversationally, into place before Jamie leads us out of the foyer and into a gorgeously mysterious room.

SYT's studio space has been decked out with heavy swags of foliage - the Sleeping Wood - while, slumbering on a canopied bed, is Princess Rose (Jenni Wright). And maybe this isn't pretend either. For even when the youngsters, who are mostly under-fives, jump up and down - thud! thud! thud! - she doesn't move a muscle. The Prince (Fraser Macleod) arrives, follows our advice and kisses her awake. What a sneaky trick because, surely, that's the end? So soon? Nah - it's the start of a nicely-judged piece of retrospective storytelling which makes the young audience a frequent part of the action. Not just shouting out, but getting up and physically joining in.

SYT's declared aim is "creating quality theatre for and by children and young people". This charming, generously involving production certainly puts a big tick - make that a loving kiss - in that box. We all end up happy, having had an hour of fun - and even the grumpy King (Philip Napier) has acquired a smile.