

Children's Theatre Reviews

Playfully taking theatre for young audiences seriously

We Are The Monsters

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By Flossie Waite

Colette Sadler – Stammer Productions

Southbank Centre

12th – 23rd December (<http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whatson/we-are-the-monsters-94210>)

For ages 4-9

The sugar plum fairy this ain't. Nuttier than *The Nutcracker* and more surreal than *The Snowman*, *We Are The Monsters* is a bizarrely brilliant dance show from Stammer Productions.

A collection of cardboard boxes slowly come to life – sections fall off, various things pop out, some even begin to move around the stage. From them, monsters emerge, moving in strange contortions that proffer the odd flash of recognition – a monster in gold lamé is suddenly a bit like an ostrich; another lumpy, furry creature could be, at a pinch, an elephant. To Brendan Dougherty's spacey, techno soundtrack, Colette Sadler's choreography ranges from the monsters' reccy to their rave.



Philine Rinnert's costumes use recognisable materials and items of clothing to create abstract animals – lots of blue jackets zipped together make an almost-octopus. They are flexible enough for the performer inside to shape-shift, but for the exact coordinates of their limbs to remain a mystery: A body moves onto the stage on all fours, though both 'ends' are legs, connected to big, twerking bums – and the performer's head is where?

Particularly noticeable about the performance was the dialogue it prompted – children in the audience were keen (desperate!) to point out what they could see to guardians, to posit their theories as to what was happening, and why, and who these creatures were meant to be. The audience naturally become co-creators in a show that offers only questions, deciding either to string the series of absurd scenes into characters and narrative, or simply to let the kooky chips fall where they may. And all to the show's discernible heartbeat of *What next?*

We Are The Monsters is joyous – the joy of movement, of material, of occasional madness. This is a game-changing production that should shape performances for children in the zaniest of ways.

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