

The Snow Queen – warming up those chilly Edinburgh nights

The new production at the Lyceum adds a Scottish twist to the classic fairytale

There's no better antidote to a dark and gloomy winter's night than huddling together in the warm glow of live theatre. This year the Lyceum has a brilliant new production of the Snow Queen to offer cheer in the Edinburgh chill; a proper old good-versus-evil fairytale, brought to the stage with sparkle and style.

The enduring classic from Hans Christian Andersen follows Gerda on a perilous journey north to save her best pal Kei from the evil clutches of the Snow Queen – who may be wicked but rocks her costumes with dazzling icy glamour. Gerda soon learns she doesn't just have to save Kei, but foil the Snow Queen's dastardly plan and save the whole of humanity from the grips of an eternal winter. Not exactly a simple job, but Gerda is a resilient sort, fiercely loyal to her friend, and takes to the quest with determination and gusto. We are rooting for her as she flies, sails, skis and rides her way across magical lands, meeting all sorts of curious characters who help or hinder her along the way.

The Snow Queen has inspired countless retellings, most famously Disney's Frozen, but it seems very much at home in the Scottish setting of this new adaptation from writer Morna Young. The landscapes, both menacing and full of wonder, are easy to re-imagine as the Scottish Highlands. The people are spirited and hardy as they struggle against adversity and some terrible weather. It's re-told in Scots language too,

exploring different dialects which adds an interesting dimension to the story.

There is a lot of talent on display in this production. The set itself is a joy to the eyes, beautifully wrapping the theatre auditorium around the stage to transform it seamlessly into the Snow Queen's Palace, and all the magical lands in-between.

The musical score steps in perfectly to add zing to the drama. There's everything in there, from the big singalong numbers to a big-licks, rock guitar sword fight and a heart-wrenching cello solo from imprisoned Kei (with Sebastian Lim-Seet frighteningly convincing as the tortured captive). There are some powerful scenes where music, movement and lights come together perfectly. It may be a classic tale but the creative team have added a generous dash of rock and roll spirit to this production – even Corbie the crow has a whiff of German industrial metal in his manner. From acting to costumes, music and staging, it's a strong collective effort but you can sense the influence of Director Cora Bisset at the helm, star of the huge Fringe hit "What Girls Are Made of".

On the critical side, the story does take a little while to get going as the stage is set. There are some moments in the first half when it feels a little tinny, lacking in the big show 'oomph' that it promises to deliver – like listening to an epic song with the speakers unplugged. The various Scots accents and dialects can be a bit grating at times and some of the jokes are just a little too cheesy to land – but then that's all part of the DNA of a Christmas family show.

The production really hits its stride and takes off into the stratosphere after the interval. Be prepared for lots of magical surprises, great music and a cheeky double-entendre packed performance from Hamish the Unicorn, bringing it all back into the fun zone.

All in all this is great theatre and a splendid new production of a family favourite. Even the most cynical of Christmas critics will be unable to leave the show without cracking a smile or two. Do yourself a favour, get out of the cold for a few hours and wrap yourself in the warm embrace of this magical story.

Catch the Snow Queen at the Lyceum Theatre until 31 December.
Book tickets at <https://lyceum.org.uk/events/the-snow-queen-23-24>



Claire Dargo as the Snow Queen at the Lyceum. Costumes and set design by Emily James. Image Credit©Jess Shurte



SnowQueen at Lyceum. Costumes and set design by Emily James. Image Credit ©Jess Shurte



SnowQueen at the Lyceum. Costumes-and-set design by Emily James. Image Credit ©Jess-Shurte



SnowQueen at the Lyceum. Samuel Pashby as Corby and Rosie Graham as Gerda. Costumes and set design by Emily James. Image Credit©Jess Shurte©Jes.jpg