

The Lost Sock
by Tusk Puppets and Andy Manning
Original Story by Charlotte Thomas
The Court Theatre
16–27 April 2024

Anticipation rises in the auditorium as the audience of under tens find their seats at The Court Theatre. The stage is set with a giant storytelling chair, a huge cupboard and big bunk beds. Squeals erupt as glimpses of furry puppets are caught, the audience is hooked and the show is ready to begin.

The Lost Sock is a surefire holiday treat, telling the tale of Jo, the sock and the search for their missing best friend Wizz. This is a story every child and their parents can relate to, a tangle of mismatched socks at the bottom of the laundry basket happens in every household.

This play, however, like all good stories for children goes well beyond simple story telling. It works on a range of familiar emotions, friendship and fear, loss and loneliness. Jo, with the help of friends, must quest into the unknown, conquer their anxiety and emerge a stronger, more confident individual.

The Lost Sock treats its young audience with respect. A large creative team has worked very hard to bring the magic of theatre to the upcoming generation. Four young, energetic, gifted puppeteers narrate, sing, dance and engage their audience throughout. The flexible set provides inventive platforms for the puppets and is easily manipulated to change scenes. The music and the soundscape are great, disco balls, lighting and bubble machines captivate.

The hand puppets are terrific. Furry and wide-eyed the brightly coloured socks, undies, t-shirts and singlets create memorable characters. Who will forget the bully boy, farting undies? Or the scary washing machine? The actors are often visible, though at all times it is the puppets who are telling the story. There is often so much happening it can be hard to figure out whose hands are manipulating the number of puppets on the stage.

Audience participation is vital for children's theatre. The actors work well with this, encouraging but not forcing it. The all-audience dance sequence was energetically enjoyed and was a welcome change from the routine invitation to a small number of children on the stage.

My young friend Amelia, aged nine, was enthusiastic about her experience as were the young ones around me. Adults were clearly enjoying the play while watching their children so excitedly engaged in the magic.

Robyn Peers