

Carnival of the Animals at Riverside Studios | Theatre review

New musical *Carnival of the Animals* has been brought delightfully to life at Riverside Studios. Performed in an intimate theatre with beautifully designed set and costumes, it grabs you from the very beginning.

Director Thom Southerland has made incredibly good use of the studios, with the entire cast moving seamlessly through the stage and manipulating the sets with ease. His direction has steered this tremendous company into a well-oiled machine. They are always working together to create moments of impeccable timing. Anita Dobson shines as the lead. She is charming, engaging and downright hilarious.

Claire Machin as Emilie the Elephant and Jacob Chapman as Henri the Lion are also particular favourites with the audience. Their natural sense of comedic timing is clear to everyone watching them perform. This cast is not only funny though. Their strong voices and dancing build to become more and more energetic as the show progresses, culminating in a thrilling finale. Solos performed in such an intimate theatre can be quite intimidating, but the actors sing them with confidence and heart. The chemistry between Bronté Barbé as Odette and Liam Doyle as Shake is also particularly charming to watch. They add the perfect amount of tenderness to the show.

Everything about this production works in beautiful harmony. The sets and costumes are extremely clever – the use of puppets to represent the birds is particularly enjoyable. The cast work as a team to bring such charm and spirit to the show, while the music and lighting is perfectly timed.

Suitable for ages six and up, this musical is wonderfully fun for both children and adults. While funny and sweet for the kids, it was the adult audience members who were laughing the hardest at its charm and wit. You will leave wanting to go back and see it again.

Alice Fitzgerald

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