

Review: Stick Man

By Suzanne Cleave

***Stick Man* at Theatre Royal Plymouth**

Freckle Productions brought the magical story of *Stick Man* to life on stage over two dates at the Theatre Royal this week.

The much-loved book, written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, is a firm favourite with young children and families, and like the pair's other offerings such as *The Gruffalo* and *The Snail and the Whale*, it is perfect for the theatre.

Stick Man, who lives in the family tree with his Stick Lady Love and stick children three, becomes separated from his loved ones and has to embark on a series of adventures before he can finally be reunited with them.

From a scary dog who tries to have a nibble of him, to a boy on the beach who tries to use him as a flag for his sandcastle and a cheeky swan who wants to utilise him in its nest – all of these took him further and further away from home.

This a story about bravery and perseverance, as *Stick Man* overcomes all of these obstacles, to reach the family tree and his loved ones in time for Christmas.

Of course, the appearance of Father Christmas himself, who eventually helps to save the day and guide *Stick Man* back to his family, was received with a hearty cheer!

Who would have thought a story about a stick would become so popular? Well after all, what child hasn't used their imagination to transform a humble stick into a sword, a stirring spoon or a pen.

The trio of actors who are taking the adaptation on tour – Tyler Ephraim, Clair Gleave and Lawrence Cole – are full of energy and conviction. The set was simple but imaginative, with the family tree at the heart. The cast used numerous props, costumes, puppetry and instruments to their full advantage to bring every aspect of the story to life.

With plenty of catchy songs, lots of audience participation and an appearance from the man in red, *Stick Man* is a must-see for families with young children, and looking

around it was clear to see that the adults were enjoying it just as much! It's the ideal introduction to theatre for little ones.

Stick Man is magical, interactive and uplifting and at this time of year, perfect to get you in the mood for Christmas! Catch it if you can.