

School plays

A *The King and I*

This was not only a great night out, but a sophisticated and professional staging of this popular musical. The orchestra accompanied the well-known songs beautifully. The striking and effective stage set, cleverly and unusually lit, was a perfect background for the stunning colours of the beautiful costumes. The ballet sequence was very cleverly done: the audience became the royal audience for this so completely that it was a surprise when the players turned towards the King, watching from the back of the stage. The elegant style of the dancers, in this as well as in the rest of the play, was charming. And then there were Anna and the King. Lucy Rainer as Anna impressed the audience with her confidence, her singing, dancing (and whistling!) as soon as she stepped on stage. She suggested a complexity of character completely matched by Jim Wright as the King, his kindness clear despite his aggressive manner. There was real, deeply felt sadness in the final scene – this was a brilliant show.

B *The Café*

After the success of the school play last year, I would be lying if I didn't say that I wondered whether or not *The Café* could compare. They hadn't put up large numbers of amusing posters around school, and thus the audience were unsure of what was to come. Before the play had even started, as the audience were looking for their seats, a young boy was playing the piano. This immediately created an interesting atmosphere, of which the audience were a part. Originally a television show, this episode of *The Café* was specifically designed for the theatre, and I think that although it was an ambitious choice, they managed to put on a good production. Their set design and their use of costumes were both very effective. In my view, there were some outstanding performances, and Sarah Leeds was particularly good as the lively waitress. This was certainly an interesting play, with a reasonably large cast and a range of accents that weren't always convincing. However, setting this aside, nothing distracted us from the humorous plot of a play which was beautifully acted throughout.

C *Scary Play*

Usually the plays that I get to review are professional productions, but last Thursday I had the rare pleasure of seeing a group of young actors put on a performance in their school. They put on a production of *Scary Play*, a work designed to provide interesting material as well as an opportunity to have some fun. This was an enthusiastic production, and the actors clearly had a great time performing for the audience of friends and family. As there are more pupils than parts in the play, at least six of the roles had to be shared between two actors. It was a credit to the young people involved, however, that having more than one person acting these characters actually felt very natural. This performance was a real treat to watch, and the young people involved are a credit to their teacher, Mr Weeks, who had obviously worked very hard with his students on the production. I especially liked the live music that was performed to create a frightening and mysterious atmosphere. Well done to them all!

D *Lost in the Castle*

Having seen every school production over the past four years, I believe this one was the most moving, the most interesting and the most entertaining in a long time. To add to the amazement that those who saw the performance must still be feeling, it is very important to point out that almost everyone in the school contributed in some way to this production. It was truly a team effort. Both lead and supporting actors gave lively and witty performances, keeping the audience involved throughout the play. The backstage and lighting crews were excellent and worked tirelessly to make the very complicated scene changes fit together smoothly. The technicians were great and David Forbes worked out the lighting system, without assistance, in just two weeks of rehearsals. One could see how hard the students had worked together in bringing the production to life and how the determination of all allowed them to put on a memorable performance.

Questions 16 – 30

You are going to read reviews of four school drama productions. For questions **16 – 30**, choose from the productions (**A – D**). The productions may be chosen more than once.

Mark your answers **on the separate answer sheet**.

About which production does the reviewer say

it was easy to see that the actors were enjoying themselves?	16	
one aspect of the acting was sometimes weak?	17	
a great effort was made to maintain the flow of the production?	18	
genuine emotions were expressed?	19	
one person prepared for it particularly quickly?	20	
by selecting this play the students set themselves a challenge?	21	
a potential difficulty regarding the cast size was successfully dealt with?	22	
people felt involved from the moment they walked in?	23	
people watching forgot they were not actually in the play themselves?	24	
the extent of the help given to the students was evident?	25	
it was better than others they had been to?	26	
the lighting was different from that in other productions?	27	
they did not have high expectations of it?	28	
the music was familiar to many people?	29	
it is not the sort of production they normally go to?	30	