

REVIEW 2008

Critics' choice

Perô

Unicorn

Michel Tournier's story of a lovelorn baker's moonlit travails, with a script and score by Guus Ponsioen, swept along on rollicking visual gags and clever comic songs in an hour-long adaptation from visiting Dutch theatre company Speeltheater. Age 6+.

Secrets

Polka

In the hands of adapter and director Vicki Ireland, Jacqueline Wilson's story blossomed into an absorbing emotional drama. Strong stuff – but there was humour to lighten the load. Age 9+.

The Man Who Planted Trees

Unicorn

The arboriculturist may have been the subject but was his dog who was the star of Puppet State Theatre Company's lyrical adaptation of Jean Giono's environmental fable. Thanks to the waggish canine, the potentially earnest plot provided plenty of laughs. Age 7+.

The Red Fortress

Unicorn

Carl Miller's new play placed the fall of Granada in 1491 under the uncompromising gaze of three young people, one Muslim, one Jew and one Christian. Against the odds, singing romantic ballads, reciting poetry and fired up by physics and astronomy, they succeeded in winning over the Playstation generation. Age 8-13.

Skellig

Shaw

Birmingham Stage Company's lyrical adaptation of David Almond's novel maintained the powerful emotional charge of the story without overworking it and provided earthy comedy as well. Age 7+.