

Puss in Boots – Givatayim Theatre

On Behalf of the Father / Avi Ashkenazi

No Need for Special Effects

When I asked my son if he'd like to come with me to see *Puss in Boots*, he grimaced. What can I say, he'd rather play soccer with his friends. After some persuasion, entreaties and other manipulations, the miraculous happened – I managed to drag him to the Givatayim Theatre. We took our seats, the lights went down, and a shortly after the play began, the little one had to admit: Dad was right again.

The sets and the effects are perhaps not as impressive as those of the annual “Festigal” musical extravaganza, but it turns out you can manage very well without smoke, robots and flashing lights. The play, performed by four actors – Liat Azar, Rafael Azran, Eran Ben-Zvi and Doron Ben-David – captivated Illy and the dozens of other kids in the theatre. Coupled with the fact that for many of them this was their first encounter with the theatre, there is no doubt that the tale of a cat who tricks everyone does the job exceedingly well. The children laughed, followed the events onstage in suspense, and even happily cooperated during the riddles posed to the Prince and the Wizard.

Puss in Boots is definitely a good choice for a quality family outing.

On Behalf of the Son / Illy Ashkenazi

It Was Great Fun

Truth is I expected something like the “Festigal” with all the big stars. But when I came into the theatre I saw actors I don't know at all, actors who don't appear on television or even my CDs.

At first I thought the play wouldn't be any good. But I quickly discovered that it was really great fun to sit in a dark theatre and see how the Miller left his son a cat, Puss in Boots, who can even talk. To see how he tricks everyone and turns the Miller's Son into a prince with a palace and, of course, how he fools the wicked Wizard.

The funniest part was the sword fights and the riddles that the Prince could barely solve. But the part that was most fun was at the end of the play when... Dad won't let me tell, because it's better if you go and see the play and its special ending for yourself.

Puss in Boots after the classic tale from the Brothers Grimm

Givatayim Theatre

Puss in Boots, an expert trickster and a prankster, helps a fine young man and Princess Marzipan find love and one another, despite a scheming Wizard and obstacles and difficulties (including a King who loves eating cookies).

All this is told in delightful rhymes accompanied by songs, with lots of humor, riddles and puns, as befitting fairytales and fables. A play with spectacular sets, original music and colorful costumes.

Written and directed by Adi Leviatan. Music by Yiftach Prath. Choreography by Efrat Kedem.

[From *Habama*, 22.01.2008]

Anat Munitz

What a Cat Won't Do for Bourekas

Dana and Anat found Givatayim Theatre's delightful and witty production of *Puss in Boots* particularly topical

Two days before Dana and I went to see *Puss in Boots*, something weird happened. Micro, our cat with the devious sparkle in his eye, died. That is, all the signs pointed to it. It was evening, the street was dark, and he lay there lifeless. After the initial shock and tears, we took him, wrapped in a sheet, and held a dignified burial ceremony. We buried him in the yard, eulogized him and lit a candle for the elevation of his soul (one of the nine, anyway). And then suddenly, as if from the mist of a hallucination, we saw Micro alive, breathing and padding towards us with the lordliness of a battle-hardened Mafioso. We were so overjoyed that we immediately gave him his favorite delicacy (gefilte fish), and the monument in the yard became "the Tomb of the Unknown Cat". Two days later we went to the Givatayim Theatre to see *Puss in Boots*.

In three words – a delightful production! In greater detail – it is charming, funny, refreshing, witty and not at all childish. The story, after the well-known European fairytale, is not complicated: Puss (the excellent Rafael Azran) is hungry. He is prepared to do anything for something to eat (even play dead and come back to life). He quickly realizes that the most profitable profession is mediation, or in this case, matchmaking.

All the characters in the play are looking for the perfect match, particularly Princess Marzipan Rose (Liat Azar, who already stood out in *Flying Babies*). She is so desperate that she doesn't care what he looks like (as long as he has a flat tummy and a full head of hair), what his lineage is (as long as he's a prince with a crown on his head), his real estate (he should, of course, come with a palace) – as long as there's love. Although Puss thinks that love is just food for thought, he puts on his boots, musters his street smarts, and sets to work: he takes advantage of the Wizard's fragile ego, having already been rejected by the Princess (a case of bad breath), helps the poor Miller's son to impersonate a prince and win the royal heart and purse, and thus moves closer, step by calculated step, to the long-awaited banquet.

Although *Puss in Boots* is a brilliant production in every respect – direction, acting (superb), music, choreography, costumes and lighting – its true charm lies in the text

(Adi Leviatan, writer and director). It is replete with clever jokes and ironic and relevant references to 21st-century Israeli culture (while most of this is lost on a young audience, for the older audience it is pure enjoyment). Puss refers to food as “food for an aching soul”, the Princess conducts the battle for her heart like a Channel 2 game show host, and the Miller’s Son explains his ignorance with “There was a strike that day”.

Everything turns out well in the end. The Wizard realizes that his soul mate must be “beautiful and rich, and of course, she’ll be a witch”, the Miller’s Son dares to reveal his true identity to Her Royal Marzipaness, the Princess rises above her shallow worldview and discovers that the most important thing in life is love, and Puss is invited to the wedding and consumes huge quantities of cheese bourekas.

Dana was very impressed by the production. She thought Puss sang very well, that his boots were very red and the Princess’s dress was very beautiful. Regarding the play’s message, however, it turned out that she’s on Puss’s side: “Love, love, I hate love! I’m hungry, why don’t you buy me an ice cream?”

Written and directed by Adi Leviatan. Cast: Doron Ben-David, Liat Azar, Eran Ben-Zvi, Rafael Azran. Choreography: Efrat Kedem. Music: Yiftach Prath. Sets: Danny Beilinson. Lighting: Uri Rubinstein. Costumes and masks: Liat Reichenberg-Oron. Production manager: Haim Vider. For ages 3-8 and the whole family.

[From *Achbar Online*, 02.09.2008]

Who Will Win Children's Play of the Year?

Eighteen fine plays are competing for the title. Orna Porat has won it in the past and this year will be awarded a special prize for her contribution to children's theatre in Israel.

In recent years children's theatre has flourished in Israel. The choice is vast, most are well-crafted, quality productions, the subjects are varied, and even parents can find interest in productions aimed at young audiences.

On Thursday, September 11, the third annual Theatre for Children and Youth awards will be held at the Suzanne Dellal Center in Tel Aviv. Lifetime awards will be presented to pioneers of theatre for children and youth, and to Orna Porat and Menachem Golan. A special prize will be awarded to puppet designer Esther Kogan-Peker. The event will be attended by Minister of Science, Culture and Sport Ghaleb Majadleh.

This year eighteen productions will be competing for the tile of Children's Play of the Year. Three will be chosen as Plays of the Year in the preschool, children, and youth categories.

This year's contenders are:

Puss in Boots – Givatayim Theatre; *Following the Dog* – Hanefesh Theatre; *Igor and the Flight of the Cranes* – Hanefesh Theatre; *Aya Ouch Ow* – Teatron Shelanu; *To Myself* – Kibbutz Theatre; *Under the Dommim Tree* – Kibbutz Theatre and Mediatek; *Uzu and Muzu from Kakaruzu* – Mediatek; *The Secret Garden* – National Youth Theatre; *Born to Dream* – National Youth Theatre; *Roots* – National Youth Theatre; *Made in Yizre'el* – Society for the Advancement of Contemporary Theatre; *Red Riding Hood, Purple Brush* – Al Saraya Theatre; *Stories of Itamar and Ruthie* – Orna Porat Theatre for Children and Youth; *Zig Zag Kids* – Orna Porat Theatre for Children and Youth; *Pajama Party* – Orna Porat Theatre for Children and Youth; *The Miserly King* – Mifras Theatre; *The Kite Boy* – Goshen Theatre