

NORTH SHORE MUMS

NSM Theatre Review: Cautionary Tales for Children

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<http://www.northshoremums.com.au/nsm-theatre-review-cautionary-tales-for-children/>

With so many things to see and do these school holidays, North Shore Mum Kath Boon reviewed the wickedly entertaining kid's cabaret Cautionary Tales for Children, starring Virginia Gay (from TV's Winners & Losers and All Saints) at Sydney Opera House.



Virginia Gay in Cautionary Tales for Children

Clearly, in 1907, when Hilaire Belloc was writing his “Cautionary Tales for Children” rhyming verse, kids were not that different to today – fewer electronics but just as keen on things a little bit dark and macabre. Or maybe that is just my eleven year old?

In Cautionary Tales for Children, Sydney Opera House Studio becomes home to an eccentric nanny/teacher/philosopher of sorts (played by Virginia Gay, an actor with a most remarkable voice for both speaking and singing in my opinion) who shares rather gruesome tales about the dangers of making bad choices, the pitfalls of childhood and the rewards for good behaviour, most of which end in a less than pleasant passing.



The show is playing at Sydney Opera House

The small, intimate theatre really adds to the experience and the children are invited to sit close to the stage, allowing for plenty of audience participation as Gay brings them into the stories with her questions about their favourite toys and pets. Her off-the-cuff responses to some of these were among my favourite parts of the show – why indeed do all turtles need to be ninjas?

Original music by Mark Jones brings Belloc's tales to life – I recognised many of these poems from my own childhood, but the mix of cabaret style songs and storytelling added a new dimension that countered any trouble that the young audience may have had with the vocabulary and themes. The adults in the audience were clearly enjoying themselves as much as the children – always a great sign in a theatre performance for the younger set.

My children (aged 11 and almost 6) were varied in their response. I knew I was challenging Mr almost 6 as the show is recommended for ages 7+, but he enjoyed the lighter moments and laughed heartily in a few places, though overall it was a bit too complex for him. Miss 11 is a lover of all things dark and... well, I will let her share her own thoughts...

Cautionary Tales for Children was definitely for older kids. I found it really enjoyable – creepy but really funny. The dark humour was very entertaining and even a little gruesome at times. (Mum's note – she LOVES things that are a little gruesome) Being able to sit close to the front was really good.



CAUTIONARY TALES FOR CHILDREN

Virginia Gay was available for photos and questions in the foyer after the show – unfortunately my young theatre-goers are not willing subjects for photography very often and this was no exception – but plenty of people took the chance to speak to her. They were also encouraged to share their favourite parts of the show in writing.

The Opera House is always a lovely place to spend some time in Sydney – we arrived early and had lunch at the Opera Kitchen where my two declared the kid's chicken burger meal to be a winner.

[Cautionary Tales for Children is playing at Sydney Opera House Studio until April 24. Details.](#)