

## [The Little Mermaid](#)



at The Lowry

Adapted from the Hans Christian Andersen story by Poppy Burton-Morgan  
with music by Matt Devereaux

Reviewed by [John Waterhouse](#) April 2018

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Every once in a while, someone claims to have created a new genre, which is normally code for saying it is really a pastiche of something else. With *The Little Mermaid*, it looks like Metta Theatre Company have actually succeeded in doing just this by bringing together gymnastics, tricks, dance, actor/musician and singing to create what is truly a circus musical.

*The Little Mermaid*

is a joy to watch with seamless, non-stop action blending with a highly creative original music score and spirited singing and acting.

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*The Little Mermaid* really does have something for everyone, truly crossing all age barriers - at least from the age of 8 upwards. The basic story is a simple Hans Christian Andersen tale which whilst being accessible to all has some profound insights into what it means to be human.

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Metta Theatre have taken some liberties with the story (as seemingly do all film and theatre companies regarding this work), so however well you think you know what's going to happen, expect a few surprises. The story is told through a mixture of narration, dialogue, song and dance, maintaining interest throughout. Every stunt has a purpose in either telling the story or enhancing the mood and nothing has been sandwiched in just for effect.

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*The Little Mermaid* is very much a visual experience, with bright, vibrant costumes, some impressive stage items and a green backdrop which keeps us constantly reminded that we are, for the most part at least, in an undersea world. A combination of good sound effects and impressive stunts frequently give the impression that the performers are moving through water (or diving into it), and some of the stunts got gasps of trepidation from the audience before even being executed; this really is circus but blended with graceful dance movements to give both an aesthetic and thrilling performance.

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There are no memorable sing-along songs in *The Little Mermaid* but the artist score by **Matt Devereaux** helps create the dreamy undersea world as well as enhancing all the drama points of the story. The feel of the music is very modern although only instruments are used, which is perhaps fitting for a story which originated in the Victorian era. Writer/Director **Poppy Burton-Devereaux** has done an excellent job in blending the musicianship with the acting and the overall effect is a very slick production.

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In the true style of a collective theatre company, some of the main roles are alternated on, by different members of the cast. The title role of Little was played this evening by **Tilly Lee-Kronick** who gave an excellent performance facially and vocally regardless of whether she was sat on the floor or hanging upside down from a hoop over twenty feet above the stage. The same remarkable versatility was demonstrated by **Matt Knight** as the Prince, whose high dive is truly something to be experienced. Interestingly, two of the Mermaid were played by men with **Josh Frazer** (also a menacing Sea witch tonight) and **Roo Jenkyn-Jones** in alternating roles but if anything, this added to giving the impression of a parallel undersea universe. Credit must also be paid to actor/musicians and **Aelfwyn Shipton** (blending violin playing with circus talent), **Rosie Rowlands** and **Rosalind Ford**.

This is a highly-recommended and stunningly original show. Bring on more circus theatre of this remarkable calibre please. *The Little Mermaid* is on at the Lowry until Saturday 14th April as part of a national tour.