

# FANTASTIC MR FOX by Singapore Repertory Theatre

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## “Sly Fun With Fantastic Mr Fox”

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**Reviewer: Isaac Tan**

**Performance: 16 August 2019**

In order to survive and feed his family, Mr Fox steals food from three mean farmers (Boggis, Bunce, and Bean). Enraged and humiliated, the farmers go all out to exterminate the foxes, forcing them to go underground. Will Mr Fox manage to save his family?

How do you stretch such a simple plot out to an hour, while retaining the attention of 400-odd children?

By surprising the audience at every turn, and roping in the children to help the foxes dig.

Fresh from directing *Faust/Us* for Nine Years Theatre, Cherilyn Woo proves that she can entertain children, too. She utilises every nook, cranny, and fly bar of the theatre as characters and props appear from everywhere. The pre-show segment in which the characters teach the children how to dig pulls the young audience into the action, and encourages them to imagine the animals going farther underground.

Vester Ng shines as the charismatic and quick-witted Mr Fox, who seems to be able to get out of any situation at the drop of a hat. He is complemented by Isabella Chiam’s charming performance as a loving Mrs Fox to both her husband and her children. The little exchanges the couple have, and the clear concern they have for each other, is endearing to watch.

Huge kudos go to Ric Liu, Sugie Phua, and Sharon Sum, who double up as the fox children and the farmers. It is no mean feat to play two very different characters in consecutive scenes, while dashing for a complete costume change. The comic sequences among them as the bumbling farmers are tight, which adds to the general mirth of the show.

All of this is rounded up by Juni Goh as the Badger, whose gentle demeanour invites the audience into story as he narrates and offers witty commentary – often at the expense of the farmers.

That said, the show does drag on a little, especially during the digging sequences in order to give the actors time to change costumes. Additionally, Mr Fox addressing the morality of his actions by saying that his family needs to survive, and that every parent would do anything for his child seems unsatisfactory – do the ends justify the means?

While Mr Fox did not dig himself out of that moral quandary, that did not detract from an enjoyable show that emphasises the importance of kinship and community.

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## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

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### **FANTASTIC MR FOX by Singapore Repertory Theatre**

31 July – 13 September 2019

KC Arts Centre

## **ABOUT THE REVIEWER**

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**Isaac** graduated from the National University of Singapore with a BA (Hons) in Philosophy, and he took Theatre Studies as a second major. He started reviewing plays for the student publication, Kent Ridge Common, and later developed a serious interest in theatre criticism after taking a module at university. He is also an aspiring poet and his poems have appeared in Symbal, Eunoia Review, Eastlit, and Malaise Journal.