

ADVERTISEMENT

News Web

HUFFPOST ENTERTAINMENT

SEARCH >

Like 276K

April 24, 2011 | Log In | Sign Up

Connect

FRONT PAGE | POLITICS | BUSINESS | ENTERTAINMENT | MEDIA | TECH | COMEDY | SPORTS | STYLE | WORLD | FOOD | LIVING | IMPACT | EDU | LOCAL

ENTERTAINMENT | MEDIA | COMEDY | MUSIC | TV | CELEBRITY KIDS | MOVIEFONE

Get Alerts

Michael Giltz
Freelance writer and raconteur

GET UPDATES FROM MICHAEL GILTZ

FAN RSS EMAIL Like 1

Theater: *War Horse* Gallops Onto Broadway

Posted: 04/14/11 11:00 PM ET

React > Inspiring Funny Hot Scary Outrageous Amazing Weird Crazy

Read more > Lincoln Center, London Theater, Michael Morpurgo, War Horse, Broadway, Drama, Theater, Entertainment News

SHARE THIS STORY

Like 2 likes. Sign Up to see what your friends like.

2 25 5 4
 share tweet email comment

Get Entertainment Alerts

Sign Up

Submit this story

WAR HORSE *** out of **** LINCOLN CENTER THEATER

A massive critical and commercial hit in the UK (where I saw it first), *War Horse* comes to Broadway fully intact. It's a dazzling theatrical achievement that is sure to move audiences here as much as it has in London, where the children's book it is based on (by beloved author **Michael Morpurgo**) is considered a classic.

Let's be clear at the start: *War Horse* is an ideal introduction to the theater for young people (think of it as *The Lion King* with a solid story) but it is *not* children's theater.

It tells the story of a rough young lad and his love for the horse Joey, but that's really a way in to illuminating the horrors of World War I and war in general. Making the bleakness of battle hit home again is the real achievement of the show. If you would hesitate before showing your child *Bambi*, then you definitely should not take them to *War Horse*. Get a babysitter and see it yourself. Mature kids and teenagers will eat it up, even if they cry at the sight of wounded and dead horses (and people, but then audiences often silently watch a hundred men die and then gasp when a horse is caught in barbed wire).

As in the fine novel, Albert (Seth Numrich) is the son of a ne'er do well farmer (Boris McGiver) in rural England, a man who drinks and gambles away the family money. Out of sheer spite against his brother,

ADVERTISEMENT

PHOTO GALLERIES



PHOTOS: The Funnest People Not On Twitter



Miranda Kerr & Orlando Bloom Step Out To 'The



The Funnest Somecards For Easter 2011



Weekly Roundup of eBay Vintage Clothing Finds

HUFFPOST SOCIAL NEWS

FOLLOW US



MOST POPULAR ON HUFFPOST

1 of 2 >



9/11 Responders Warned They Will Be Screened For Terrorism Ties (EXCLUSIVE)

Like 20K



Jerry Seinfeld, Donald Trump Rip Each Other In Heated Political War Of Words

Like 4K

PlayStation Network Could Be Down For Days

Billy's dad wastes the rent money on a beautiful steed that will be useless for farming. Albert ends up befriendng and caring for the animal, which soon earns its keep in unexpected ways. When the military offers a small fortune for the animal, Billy's dad breaks his word and sells the animal. Distraught, Albert runs away and signs up, stumbling from trench to trench and asking everyone he knows if they've seen his horse Joey.

The show focuses as much on Joey as Albert. Yes, the central character here is a horse, an animal brought fully to life with marvelous puppetry handled by two teams, one for Joey as a foal and one for Joey as an adult.

I love puppetry and this is some of the best work I've ever seen in a major show. Credit goes to Adrian Kohler with Basil Jones for Handspring Puppet Company. When the foal snorts into Billy's face, the audience giggles with delight. That animal is fully alive. Other distinctive moments include the dramatic moment when the foal is replaced onstage by the full-grown war horse that is Joey, not to mention a cavalry charge, scenes of horror, battlefields littered with the corpses of men and animals, and animals whipped and beaten to death as they drag cannons and dying men from one place to another in the ever-present mud.

We follow Joey from his bonding with Albert to the grim world of the trenches, then over to the German side where he is befriended by a horse lover who just wants to slip away with a widowed French woman and her daughter. Will Albert and Joey reunite? The show is so tough-minded you won't be so certain halfway through as you might be when you walk in.

Tonally, this production helmed by Marianne Elliott and Tom Morris is very similar to London, with a few modest changes that make it slightly more obvious and slightly darker. The goose, oddly enough is downplayed. I remember it vividly as amusing comic relief, but its role seems reduced. I believe -- but can't be certain -- that certain scenes featuring both the English and French and/or Germans included more dialogue in native tongues to mirror the confusion they felt. Of course, when the Germans or French are alone, they speak English with accents. Those accents feel less comfortable for this American cast than they did in the UK. Presumably imitating your neighbors is easier than imitating someone far away.

The score by Adrian Sutton is very prominent, almost ever-present, a la a film score. It's often stirring but sometimes seems intrusive. The very effective folk singing woven throughout (with songs by John Tams) works best at the stirring beginning and end, both of which will send chills up your spine. A second viewing hasn't deepened the show for me, unfortunately, but it's unquestionably solid entertainment with superlative technical elements.

It must be the way the part is written because I found the father a bit overplayed here, just like I did in the UK. Otherwise the cast led by the appealing Numrich is solid (with the exception of those accents). But it's the talent that brings Joey to life that is the real star here. (Tpby Sedgwick is the director of movement and horse sequences.) No wonder the young and adult Joey get the final bow and the biggest roar of applause.

THE 2010-2011 THEATER SEASON (ratings on a four star system)



[Like](#) 1K



Shelterpop: Unplugging Appliances: Do I REALLY Have to Do This?

[Like](#) 1K



AOL Real Estate: Prince William and Kate to Live in Royal Mansion

[Like](#) 59



Noam Chomsky Is the World Too Big to Fail? The Contours of Global Order

[Like](#) 3K



Ed Martin Daytime Disaster! Did ABC Have to Kill All My Children and One Life to Live?

[Like](#) 838



Popeater: Brad and Angelina's Strict Nanny Requirements

[Like](#) 1K



TV Squad: Maria Menounos Relives Her Paparazzi 'Wardrobe Malfunction' on 'Lopez' (VIDEO)

[Like](#) 54

DON'T MISS HUFFPOST BLOGGERS

1 of 5



Sam Waterston

Saving Easter Island's Marine Ecosystems



David O. Russell

FDR Said it All in 1936 -- Who Will Follow in His Steps Today?

People.com



Lindsay Lohan Is 'Angry' About Jail Sentence

[READ MORE](#)



Antoine Dodson Arrested

[READ MORE](#)



Stefano Langone Reveals His Relationship Status

[READ MORE](#)

[More Celebrity News at People.com](#)



Angels in America revival at Signature *** out of ****

Anything Goes ** 1/2

Arcadia with Billy Crudup *** 1/2

Bengal Tiger At The Baghdad Zoo **

Between Worlds/Entre Mundos * 1/2

Beautiful Burnout at St. Ann's Warehouse **

Blood From A Stone ** 1/2

The Broadway Musicals Of 1921 at Town Hall ***

Cactus Flower *

Catch Me If You Can *** 1/2

Devil Boys From Beyond **

The Diary Of A Madman with Geoffrey Rush at BAM ***

The Divine Sister *** 1/2

Double Falsehood **

The Dream Of The Burning Boy ** 1/2

Driving Miss Daisy **

Elf *

Elling **

A Free Man Of Color ** 1/2

Gatz ***

Ghetto Klown ***

Good People with Frances McDormand **

The Grand Manner **

The Great Game ***

Gruesome Playground Injuries ***

The Hallway Trilogy: Nursing **

The Hallway Trilogy: Paraffin ***

The Hallway Trilogy: Rose ***

How To Succeed In Business Without Really Trying ***

The Importance Of Being Earnest ** 1/2

The Interminable Suicide Of Gregory Church *** 1/2

John Gabriel Borkman * 1/2

La Bete ** 1/2

Les Miserables ***

Lombardi **

Macbeth with John Douglas Thompson **

The Merchant Of Venice *** 1/2

Middletown ***

Mike Birbiglia's My Girlfriend's Boyfriend ***

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore *

Mistakes Were Made ** 1/2

The Mother**ker With The Hat ***

Nixon In China *** 1/2

The New York Idea **

The Nightingale and Other Short Fables at BAM ***

Other Desert Cities **

Our Town with Helen Hunt ***

The Pee-wee Herman Show ***

Priscilla, Queen Of The Desert: The Musical * 1/2

The Road To Qatar *

Room ***

The Scottsboro Boys ****

Sleep No More *** 1/2

Small Craft Warnings zero stars

Three Sisters (w Maggie Gyllenhaal and Peter Sarsgaard) *** 1/2

Timon Of Athens at Public with Richard Thomas ***

War Horse ***

The Whipping Man **

Wings **

Women On The Verge Of A Nervous Breakdown **



**Backstage, Emotional Lady
Gaga Cries and Prays**



**Royal Wedding Guest List
Revealed: Who's Going?**



**'Bed Intruder' Star Antoine
Dodson Arrested**

[More Celebrity News at Popeater.com](#)

TOP VIDEO PICKS

1 of 10



**Lindsay Lohan Back in the
Slammer**

PLAY VIDEO



**Beckhams In, Obamas Out
at Royal Wedding**

PLAY VIDEO



Olsen's Wacky Fur Outfit

PLAY VIDEO

MOST DISCUSSED RIGHT NOW

1 of 2



**Viral Star Antoine Dodson
ARRESTED**



**Gwyneth Paltrow Is Right.
We're All Jealous. (Of Her
and George W. Bush.)**

HOT ON FACEBOOK

1 of 3



**What Happened To
Bradley Cooper?!**

Like 356



**Jerry Seinfeld, Donald
Trump Rip Each Other In
Heated Political War Of
Words**

Like 4K

HOT ON TWITTER

POWERED BY TOPSY

1 of 2



mayhemstudios

RT @sbeasla: What happens when you tickle a little penguin?
<http://j.mp/dEZJCM> via @huffingtonpost

retweet



twsuccess

Antoine Dodson Arrested For Marijuana Possession
<http://huff.to/edLalo>

retweet

AT THE NEW YORK MUSICAL FESTIVAL

Blood Ties ***
Fellowship * 1/2
Fingers and Toes ** 1/2
Frog Kiss *** 1/2
The Great Unknown ** 1/2
Nighttime Traffic **
Our Country *
PopArt *
Shine! The Horatio Alger Musical ** 1/2
Show Choir **
Tess: The New Musical **
Trav'lin' ***
Without You *** 1/2

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit [Michael Giltz at his website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on [Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

Note: Michael Giltz was provided with tickets to this show with the understanding that he would be writing a review.

Follow Michael Giltz on Twitter: www.twitter.com/michaelgiltz

More in Entertainment...



Lindsay Lohan
Quickly Released
From Jail After...



'The Hangover 2'
Trailers: New TV
Spots...



Kendall & Kylie
Jenner At 'Prom'
Premiere...



'Teen Mom' Jenelle
In A Bikini,
Surrounded...

Sponsored Links

Trump for President?

Do you support Donald for 2012? Vote in urgent national poll!

www.Newsmax.com/surveys

SHOCKING: 46" LCD TVs for \$54.09

Today ONLY: Unique site sells 46" LCD TVs for up to 98% off retail price.

SmartStyleLiving.com

Mom Is 55, Looks 30...

Her clever \$5 wrinkle therapy angers Botox Doctors. Find Out How!

FDXNews8.com

SHOCKING: Apple iPad 2 for \$12!

Auction site to give away 1,000+ iPad 2s for \$11.96 EACH!

NewsChannel7.com

[Buy a link here](#)

Loading comments...

Sponsored Links

Trump for President?

Do you support Donald for 2012? Vote in urgent national poll!

www.Newsmax.com/surveys

[Buy a link here](#)

HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES



Interest Rates



Civil Rights



Meet the Press



Most Popular



Japan
Earthquake



Libya



NBA



Afghanistan



Fast Food

[MORE BIG NEWS PAGES »](#)

SEARCH

FRONT
PAGE

POLITICS

BUSINESS

ENTERTAINMENT

MEDIA

TECH

COMEDY

SPORTS

STYLE

WORLD

FOOD

LIVING

IMPACT

EDU

LOCAL

ENTERTAINMENT

MEDIA

COMEDY

MUSIC

TV

CELEBRITY KIDS

MOVIEFONE

Get Alerts

[Advertise](#) | [Log In](#) | [Make HuffPost your Home Page](#) | [RSS](#) | [Careers](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Powered by Movable Type](#)

Copyright © 2011 TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | "The Huffington Post" is a registered trademark of TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. All rights reserved.