

# WHAT'S ON STAGE

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## REVIEWS

### **Avenue Q**

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WOS Rating: 4/5

With *The Book of Mormon* breaking records at the West End box office, and extending its booking period until 2014, this new production of *Avenue Q* reminds us just how talented the man that co-wrote both musicals, Robert Lopez (along with Jeff Marx for this one), is.

Showing in London for the first time since it closed at the Wyndham's Theatre in October 2010, *Avenue Q* tells the story of Princeton, a recent college graduate, who arrives on Avenue Q anxious to discover his purpose in life; but first, he must find an apartment and a job, with no work experience and an English degree.

Having won three Tony Awards, including Best Musical, and building up a cult following, one would think that seeing a show of this calibre would be wrong in a venue as small as Upstairs at the Gatehouse. However, this is quite the opposite. While at times the tiny stage means that the actors are forced to face away from half the audience – which is a tad annoying – the performance feels much more intimate.

During the hilarious number “The Internet is for Porn”, Trekkie Monster, played by Josh Wilmott, is able to get up and close with certain audience members, making them feel extremely uncomfortable while the rest of us laugh in hysterics – “Schadenfreude” at its best.

Will Jennings and Leigh Lothian bring so much likeability and adorableness to the lead characters of Princeton and Kate that you completely forget that they aren't real people, and really root for them to get together.

That is what is so great about the show. Wilmott, Lothian and Jennings, with the help of Katie Bradley and Harrison Spiers, bring so much energy and personality into each different character that you forget about the people manoeuvring the characters, even when one person is doing the voices of two different characters onstage at the same time, and someone else is moving another one (it all gets very complicated!)

Even though the most unique part of the show is the use of puppets, it wouldn't be the same without Cassandra Lee, Shin-Fei Chen and Tim Frost, who play Gary Coleman, Christmas Eve and Brian respectively. Chen, especially, gets plenty of belly laughs every time that she is onstage, although mainly for her accent, but then, “Everyone's a Little Bit Racist”!

Expect Sesame Street with foul language and puppet nudity!

-Hayley Minn