

# See below our Young Reviewers' reviews of Up 'n' Under:

The chosen review:

## **Down 'n' Out Team, to Up 'n' Underdog Champions**

Everyone loves a tale of rags to riches. However, when you've got a rugby team that have never won a game, have less than seven players and train in the local pub, then that's a whole new ball game - quite literally. John Godber's Up 'N' Under unites sporting heroism with comedy genius and scores a touch down of a fantastic show.

Ex-pro Arthur (Wayne Norman) places a bet with his nemesis Reg (Willie Elliot), and he finds himself in what seems to be an impossible position; as Coach of The Wheatsheaf Arms who just happen to be bottom of the amateur rugby league and have an added language barrier. This stylishly directed production (Jeni Draper) cleverly incorporates typical cheering hand gestures into British sign language, along with a voice over, which is natural and conversational - this show is accessible and can be enjoyed by everyone.

The energy and physicality of all the actors make for an exciting and humorous performance as they train tirelessly for their match. Each character is believable and engaging and the entire audience cannot help but will them to succeed!

Match day finally arrives; the moment of glory we've all been eagerly anticipating. As the game commences, the audience can hardly stop themselves from wanting to cheer them on - until we all remember we are in a theatre and not Twickenham stadium.

The ingenious costume design of the rugby shirts, as well as the clever set design (Amy Jane Cook) of the pitch create the illusion of the game making the atmosphere even more electric!

This production has you laughing and willing the players on but underneath it all, it inspires determination, teamwork and lots of individuality. This is a show and a match you don't want to miss.

*Up 'n' Under is on tour around the UK until Saturday 24th March 2018.*

**By Millie Golden Hope, Harrogate Grammar School**

Here are the other Up 'n' Under reviews:

**Triumph for the theatre once again with fantastic rendition of Godber classic!**

Fingersmiths and the New Wolsey Theatre provide an incredible adaptation of John Godber's classic, 'Up 'n' Under'. Here is a production that's accessible to all and great fun too. This tale of a struggling amateur rugby club comes to the Harrogate stage with all the passion and good humour that fingersmiths are known for.

The slapstick humour is hilarious from the outset, and the chemistry between the actors is fantastic, evident from the way in which they work together to produce a show in two languages - British Sign Language and spoken English. This, combined with impressive and entertaining physical theatre throughout, tells a clear and compelling story about Arthur Hoyle (Wayne Norman) - amateur rugby league legend - and his struggle to train The Wheatsheaf Arms (bottom of the local league) to beat the almighty Cobbler's Arms, run by Arthur's arch rival, Reg (Willie Elliott). However, this is more than just an underdog story, as Arthur's life savings ride on a bet that he could train a team to beat the Cobblers.

The Wheatsheaf Arms' original team - comprised of Phil (Adam Bassett), Frank (Matt Gurney), Tony (Nadeem Islam) and Steve (Stephen Collins) - are downright hilarious. Their musings are often portrayed through a combination of sign language, voice over narration, projected captions and spoken performances, and the prowess and comfort of the actors on the boards was truly shown as they played on the tensions between the modes of communication. Even when you aren't reading the captions, it's easy to understand the actors without a sound, as their physicality and characterisation was incredible. Often we forget that the basis of all acting is mime, and it was evident in this performance that good acting can span any language barrier.

The set was simple yet inventive and Amy Jane Cook's design was used to its full potential throughout. As the day of the match approaches and we arrive at the ground with the characters, we see the new kit, which was not only very professional, but double sided! This was used to great effect in conveying the drama and varying perspectives of a real televised match, and was also brilliantly comic. A true underdog story!

*Up 'n' Under, Harrogate Theatre, 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> February*

**By James Murtagh, Ashville College**

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## **Up, under and all over the place**

I recently read an article in the newspaper about the production of Up N Under by John Godber to be shown at Harrogate theatre and delightedly realised that I was going to see the exact same show. The short article ended on a question along the lines of, "why wouldn't you go see this production?" I am here to tell you exactly why.

The show seemed to set itself up for failure with the use of an overly elaborate set, almost the complete opposite to Godber's familiar style. This, coupled with a strange lack of consistency in direction and pace, makes the show almost impossible to follow, - in fact I find it difficult to name a single character without looking at the programme beside me.

The show is not irredeemable, however, with some impressive moments such as the dream sequence: The scene opens with the character in question explaining a dream they had, A dim blue light shines and the scene is put together with an interesting sound sequence that works fairly well and causes some moments of humor and an interesting pace. The only other scene that manages to execute some successful godber-like pacing is the end scene, in which the actors wear T-shirts with the different teams printed one on each side, allowing for them to shift from character to character seamlessly showing the different teams and the dynamic created. If only the whole production was held to the same standard, or at least stayed true to the source material, I suppose not all productions can be perfect, especially not this one. Overall the only way I can describe the show is messy, but not irredeemable, simply disappointing and a strange deviation from Godbers intended style.

**By Chris Booley, King James**

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## **And here's a review of 'We Are The Lions':**

### **A roaring success at Harrogate Theatre**

Based on a true story, We Are The Lions is an emotional account of an Indian woman's struggle for justice in the workplace. Set in the intimate and cosy location of the studio theatre, this production shines a spotlight on the historic abysmal treatment of workers.

Neil Gore, who also wrote the script, plays an incompetent Mr Alden. From his animated opening performance of 'In the Summertime' by Mungo Jerry under suitably purple lighting, he's a resounding success – or not. Gore's skill to take on so many roles whilst also overseeing the whole production is outstanding and the audience are particularly amused when he states, "I'll just change the lights then I'll get on with the second half of the show". Of his various stints, one of my favourites is his role as Mr John who is painfully slow to realise the hardships of working for

George Ward, but this role is of course outdone by his time as a hilarious 'Which?' advertiser for Kodak.

Audience participation is central to the performance. From the signing of petitions to the use of flashlights in the powerful guitar showpiece under a multicoloured lit set (John Kirkpatrick and Daniella Beattie), the spectators feel that they're one of the workers on the picket line with Jayaben Desai (Medhavi Patel). The use of real footage further adds to the sense of collective unity in the audience and makes the show even more realistic.

The show doesn't end happily ever after. The poignant finish, I believe, is symbolic of how the struggle for workers' rights and more specifically women's rights isn't over. This topical reference is certainly prevalent in modern day issues over the gender pay gap. Despite the continuing conflicts, "the workers united will never be defeated".

*'We Are The Lions, Mr Manager' ran at Harrogate Theatre from February 5<sup>th</sup> to February 10<sup>th</sup>. The show is touring across other Yorkshire locations, visit [townsendproductions.org](http://townsendproductions.org) for more info.*

**Lauren McGaun, The Grammar School at Leeds**