



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 05, 2019

MICHAEL GILTZ AT WORK

THEATER: "HARRY POTTER" ON BROADWAY! FINALLY!!

HARRY POTTER AND THE CURSED CHILD *** out of ****
THE CIRCLE SERIES AT CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE

It's been on Broadway for 17 months. Friends of mine saw it even earlier in London. The acclaimed original cast has moved on. And now I've FINALLY seen *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*. A few shows each year slip through my grasp and this was one of them -- a shame, since I know the books backwards and forwards and have impressed nieces and nephews for years with the fact that I interviewed J.K. Rowling many, many years ago. But times are tight and money is too tight to mention so what could I do? I entered [the digital lottery at TodayTix](#). And then I entered it the next week. And the next and the next and some 80 or so drawings later, I won!! Here are some thoughts.

THE LYRIC IS GORGEOUS -- Once a barn of a theater, the Lyric was the home of *Spiderman-Man: Turn Off The Dark*. That felt more like a circus than a musical and the cavernous space felt appropriate. But it's been completely renovated for this show. The back wall has been moved forward to make it somewhat more intimate. (It now seats some 1,600 people, rather than 1,866 seats at its peak.) And literally every detail is thoughtful and handsome, from the "H" stitched into the carpeting to the two levels of box seats on the side ala the opera and just...everything. It's so handsome that one weeps to think they may have to un-renovate it for landmark reasons when the show leaves. On the bright side, that won't happen for years and years.

THE PLAY WORKS FOR MUGGLES -- Like I said, I know the books quite well and saw all the films and even took the test at [Pottermore](#) to determine I belong in House Ravenclaw if and when I get a scholarship to Hogwarts. I also read the script for the play when it was published and thought, Gee, this won't make a lick of sense to anyone who HASN'T read the books or seen the movies. Not quite. My



Michael Giltz is a freelance writer based in NYC and can be reached at mgiltz@pipeline.com

FAVORITE LINKS

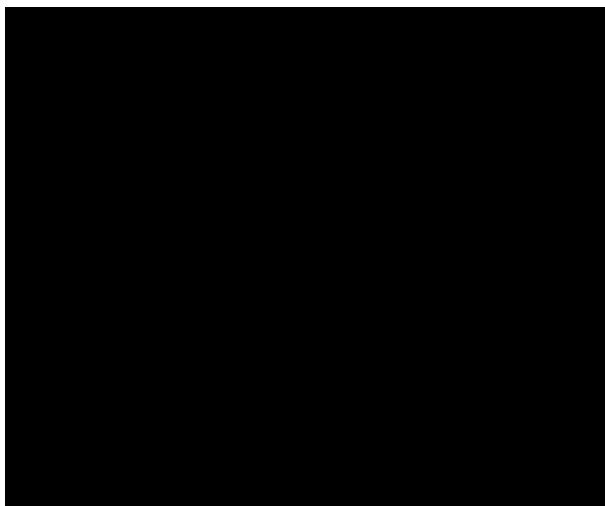
[Americablog](#)
[Five O'Clock Lightning baseball blog](#)
[Deep Pop -- Lori Lakin's Blog](#)
[The Back Page -- Jason Page on ESPN Radio](#)
[Cine-Blog -- George Robinson's Blog](#)
[Documents On Art & Cinema - Daryl Chin's Blog](#)
[Brucie G's Wondrous Blog Of Adventure and Mystery -- Bruce Greenspan's Blog](#)

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2019 (58)
▼ September (9)
[SHOWBIZ SANDBOX #463: Why Is A TV Special](#)

guest had read the first book and seen a few of the early movies. So he wasn't a novice exactly but he certainly isn't steeped in Rowling. The show worked a charm for him. After each act, he did tend to have a brief question or two about a reference made by this or that character. I happily expounded at geeky length. Undoubtedly, the play will be far more powerful for those who do love the books. But arrive five minutes early and read the summaries of the books (or just Book 8) and you'll be fine.

NO BUTTER BEER? -- The merchandise was copious and good-looking. (I was tempted by the all-black coffee mugs.) But I was astonished not to see Butter Beer available at the bar. Or some of the Potter-centric candies at the snack bar. (Perhaps I missed some, but I don't think so.) Ah well, sometimes Muggle contracts preclude obvious tie-ins -- the *Willie Wonka* musical didn't include the Wonka bar at its concession stand either, did it? I am glad to settle for the golden ticket I got when winning the lottery.



BUT HOW WERE THE SEATS? -- Oh, I knew not to expect much. I won tickets through a lottery. A single ticket to one part cost just \$20, so I paid \$80 total for two seats to the entire, two-part epic. Wonderful! But surely my seats would be in the top tier behind a pole or something? Well, my heart did sink a bit when I saw them. I had tickets in the second level (the dress circle) in row G all the way to the side in seats 9 and 11. Only three rows remained between me and the back wall. And ALL the way to the side. This is a play, not a musical. And even if I was seeing the tap-dance extravaganza *42nd Street* again, I'd much rather be in the orchestra than high up. Then I actually went to the theater and took my seats. The sight lines were impeccable and while *Harry Potter* has a lot of intimate, quiet scenes, it's certainly a big show with a lot of spectacle. I would happily buy those seats again and for more money. Frankly, I don't think any seat in dress circle would be bad. Only a few people in the boxes and way along the side in row A might have missed a tiny moment of action in

[Celebrate...](#)

[SHOWBIZ SANDBOX #462:
Fall Film Festival Roundup](#)

[MOVIES: The Scarily Good
Combination Of Hitchcock ...](#)

[MOVIES: A "Close Encounter"
With A Steven Spielber...](#)

[THEATER: "Betrayal" And The
\(Permanent?\) Success o...](#)

[SHOWBIZ SANDBOX #461:
Hollywood's Gender Pay Gap
G...](#)

[MOVIES: HALLELUJAH! A
GREAT FILM ABOUT
GOSPEL](#)

[THEATER: "HARRY POTTER"
ON BROADWAY! FINALLY!!](#)

[SHOWBIZ SANDBOX: Who
Won and Who Lost In The
Disne...](#)

- ▶ [August \(9\)](#)
- ▶ [July \(7\)](#)
- ▶ [June \(3\)](#)
- ▶ [May \(9\)](#)
- ▶ [April \(10\)](#)
- ▶ [March \(5\)](#)
- ▶ [February \(1\)](#)
- ▶ [January \(5\)](#)

- ▶ [2018 \(38\)](#)
- ▶ [2017 \(6\)](#)
- ▶ [2016 \(2\)](#)
- ▶ [2015 \(20\)](#)
- ▶ [2014 \(2\)](#)
- ▶ [2013 \(5\)](#)
- ▶ [2012 \(17\)](#)
- ▶ [2011 \(15\)](#)
- ▶ [2010 \(10\)](#)
- ▶ [2009 \(43\)](#)
- ▶ [2008 \(86\)](#)
- ▶ [2007 \(781\)](#)
- ▶ [2006 \(2412\)](#)
- ▶ [2005 \(5\)](#)

one or two scenes.

FINE, BUT THE SHOW? HOW WAS THE BLOODY SHOW? --

Great fun. *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* read a little roughly for me. (I'm not very good about reading plays or film scripts and imagining what can be done with them.) I loved the set-up. The sons of Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy head to Hogwarts and positively HATE it. And when they become friends, their parents positively hate THAT. Then things get complicated. On the page, it seemed the need to get the band back together (i.e. make Harry, Ron and Hermione the center of things) took precedence over a fresh new story. On the stage, it more cohesive, with the stories of the parents and children intertwining from the start. The smartest decision they made was to evoke a classic, Victorian-style of stage craft. No video or projections here. This show could have been staged as-is a hundred years ago. And the movement/choreography of Steven Hoggett deservedly made this the rare drama to be nominated for Best Choreography. (It should have won, actually.) He and director John Tiffany create real magic in a thousand little ways, alongside the rest of the crack technical team. It's a genuine treat to watch. Heck, even before the show begins, the stage just LOOKS gorgeous. And while most of the effects are dead simple (and doubly effective for being so), I haven't a clue how they make the entire stage seem to waver and shimmy and shake when time travel comes into play.

The original cast was acclaimed to high heavens and while I can't single out anyone in the new cast, I don't see any huge weaknesses, either. They are capable and strong, even if the action by the second half of part two gets tense and the show's idea of drama is for the actors to get a bit shouty. "My son is missing!" shouts one character. "SO IS MINE!" shouts another. Somehow, the melodrama adds to the fun.

And it IS fun. I haven't enjoyed an audience's reaction to a show this much since seeing *The Lion King*. That musical flips the audience out right at the start with the brilliant "Circle Of Life" number, a show-stopper to end all show-stoppers. Little kids stood on their seats and looked all around them positively wide-eyed with wonder. Heck, I did the same thing. And at *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*? People (not just kids) positively gasped at various revelations. They shivered in fear. They smiled with fondness over a shared memory voiced by someone on stage. When one character ventured down the center aisle of the theater, virtually everyone in the dress circle craned their neck or just stood up to peer down and watch -- they were desperate not to miss a moment. When one character walked quietly on stage for the first time, the reaction was so visceral and shocked my guest was beside himself with desire to ask me who it was. And that's not all. At the end of the first intermission and again at the end of Part One (surely the only time a stage play has ever stopped with the words "to be continued" flashed onto the curtain) and *again* at the intermission of Part Two, the creators stage both a visual spectacle and introduce a

head-spinning plot twist that left the audience positively gobsmacked and bursting with chatter.

It's a beautifully crafted production of a not-bad play, catnip for Potter fans and fun enough to send newbies to the books to see what all the fuss is about. The stagecraft is impeccable and a joy to watch. While JK Rowling only worked on the story (the script is by Jack Thorne), it shows yet again how wisely she has made use of her fame. Rather than thinning out the pleasure of those seven books by writing more Harry Potter adventures, Rowling uses her imagination and commercial power to explore new worlds and new forms of storytelling. The website Pottermore is quite innovative. The theme park rides are top-notch. The prequel movies dubbed *Fantastic Beasts* are at least *commercially* successful and Rowling is improving as a screenwriter. And now this stage show is a triumph that will surely be many a child's introduction to the pleasures of theater. All in all, that's pretty magical.

THE CIRCLE SERIES AT CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE

You don't need to win the lottery to enjoy the pleasure of live theater, even in New York City. All over the city, you'll find staged readings, semi-staged productions of little-known musicals and cabaret shows presenting songs for a musical someone would like to make someday. And it's all far more accessible and inexpensive than a ticket to Broadway.

Adding to the fun is Circle In The Square's recently launched Circle Series. Throughout the summer and fall, they offer readings of new and classic works, asking only a suggested donation of \$20 for adults and \$10 for seniors and students (meaning you won't be shamed if you can only chip in say \$5 or just a smile). All proceeds benefit the Circle In The Square Theatre School, which makes sense since students and alumni often people the casts. It's presented in partnership with the greedily named [Pigabus Institute](#).

I recently attended a reading of *The Philadelphia Story* by Philip Barry and it was quite fun. Cocktails start at 6 pm and the readings starts at 7 pm. The film starring Katherine Hepburn, Cary Grant and Jimmy Stewart is an all-time favorite of mine, but the play is slightly different and I'd never read it or seen it done. I think the film made smart choices and improved on the play, so if anyone is going to stage it again, they should start with the film script. And indeed they *should* stage it again because the story works like a charm.

The Circle Series does exactly what you want it to do. It lets you enjoy some performances for a very modest price, spot some new talent you'll want to keep an eye on and maybe introduce you to a new playwright of worth. Three more shows are on tap this season, with *Ladies In Waiting* by Elizabeth Canavan on tap September 9, *Bewilderness* by Zachary Fine on September 16 and *Pluto* by Steve

Yockey on September 23. For more info, [head here](#).

THEATER OF 2019

[Frankenstein: Under The Radar Fest at the Public](#) ** 1/2
[Minor Character: Under The Radar Festival at the Public](#) ***
[Ink: Under The Radar Festival at the Public](#) ** 1/2
[Choir Boy](#) ** 1/2
[White Noise](#) ** 1/2
[Kiss Me, Kate](#) ***
[Ain't No Mo'](#) *** 1/2
[Ain't Too Proud](#) **
[The Cradle Will Rock](#) * 1/2
[Mrs. Murray's Menagerie](#) *** 1/2
[Oklahoma! \(on Broadway\)](#) ** 1/2
[Socrates](#) **
[The Pain Of My Belligerence](#) *
[Burn This](#) **
[Hadestown](#) *** 1/2
[All My Sons](#) * 1/2
[Tootsie](#) ** 1/2
[Ink](#) ***
[Beetlejuice](#) **
[Estado Vegetal](#) ***
[Hans Christian Andersen](#) * 1/2
[Cirque du Soleil: Luzia](#) ***
[BLKS](#) ** 1/2
[Moulin Rouge](#) ** 1/2
[Bat Out Of Hell](#) **
[Unchilding](#) **
[Sea Wall/ A Life](#) ** 1/2
[Harry Potter and the Cursed Child](#) ***

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the creator of [BookFilter](#), a book lover's best friend. It's a website that lets you browse for books online the way you do in a physical bookstore, provides comprehensive info on new releases every week in every category and offers passionate personal recommendations every step of the way. He's also the cohost of [Showbiz Sandbox](#), a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day with top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available for free on iTunes. Visit Michael Giltz at his website. Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called [Popsurfing](#) and also available for free on iTunes.

POSTED BY [MICHAEL GILTZ](#) AT 6:47 PM 

NO COMMENTS:

[Post a Comment](#)

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)