

# Long Live 'Robin Hood!' - ParentMap

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**Gemma Alexander**

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[ARTS](#)

## Long Live 'Robin Hood'!

Swashbuckle to Seattle Children's Theatre immediately to see this spectacular adventure



Photo by Chris Bennion. Pictured: Hans Altwies, Basil Harris

### Bottom line

SCT's production of *Robin Hood*, which runs until May 17, **may be the best play you'll see this year — with or**

**without your kids.**

## Highlights

I don't know why I'm always surprised by how good Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) is. Maybe it's the word "children's" in the name. But SCT is not just good "for a kid's theater." It is one of Seattle's best theater companies. Yes, its target audience is in grade school, and that limits the swear words, opens the door for fart jokes (Shakespeare wasn't above them, either) and defines the educational programming surrounding each performance. But **SCT trusts its audience more than many theater companies for adults.** They never spoon feed or talk down.

***Robin Hood***, an SCT production written Greg Banks and directed by Allison Narver, is a prime example. It exposes viewers to violence, oppression and deceit, and suggests courage, loyalty and humor as the appropriate response. Drawing attention to the fact that social injustice is not a medieval relic, Robin Hood is framed as a story that four homeless people tell each other.

The story they tell follows the folk legend more closely than the Hollywood or Disney versions, with one very significant update. Robin (Hans Altwies) still falls in love with Maid Marian (Hana Lass) because of her beauty (an irrationality Will Scarlett is happy to point out), but she is given plenty of opportunity to prove that she is more than just a pretty face. **Marian is every bit as courageous and loyal as the rest of Robin's band**, shooting her way out of Nottingham Castle and fighting Robin to a draw when they meet in the forest and are fooled by each others' disguises.



Photo by Chris Bennion; Pictured: Hans Altwies, Hana Lass

**The stage set is a jungle gym for the actors**, perfectly showcasing the acrobatic fight choreography. Consisting of a platform, metal trees, balance beams and ropes, the set serves as Sherwood forest, village square and

Nottingham castle quite credibly. The scene where Robin leads a blindfolded Marian through the forest to his secret camp makes particularly good use of the stage.

The actors are as agile in their craft as in the action; each of them performs at least three roles and does it well enough that keeping track of the characters is not a challenge for the audience. With a permeable fourth wall, there are winking nods to invisible minions ("They're wearing camouflage," says the Sheriff) and **the audience is called upon to fill a couple of roles, too**. In the show we saw, sometimes we were asked for spare change, sometimes we were Merry Men or villagers. To be honest, it felt good to stand and shout, "Long live Robin Hood!" on cue, especially after the Sheriff cemented his bad-guy status by cheating in a sack race against two young audience members.

Of all the balancing acts *Robin Hood* performs — physically balancing on set pieces, balancing between self-aware and immersive storytelling — the one that **matters most to the story was the balance between its serious themes and humor**. There's no getting around the fact that *Robin Hood* is a violent story, and the bad guy is a genuine, murdering villain. But while the play will leave you thinking about the fact that the injustices Robin fights are ongoing today, **the experience of watching the play is joyful**. *Robin Hood* manages to make its point while maintaining a consistently light tone. When asked what she thought of it, my 6-year-old's first response was, "It was silly."

Upon further discussion we agreed that whether Robin lived or died or ever existed at all, the Merry Men were heroes, too. The take-home lesson from *Robin Hood* is that even if we can't all be world-class archers, **humor is as much a weapon against oppression as longbows ever were, and it is one that we can all wield**.

## Parents should know

Is your child old enough, and/or mature enough, for *Robin Hood*? ***Robin Hood's* themes of injustice and inequality are not simplified for very young viewers**. For example, the death of the villain and the marriage of Robin Hood take place midway through the second act, and the story continues to a more ambiguous end. For this reason, *Robin Hood* is recommended for children 8 and up. However, my 6-year-old was captivated from beginning to end and was never frightened. Although some things went over her head, she was able to follow the the story.

**There are two onstage deaths:** a peasant is murdered with an invisible arrow to the back, and the villain is stabbed in a sleight of hand trick that made the dagger look thrown. When the audience erupted in cheers (as much at the cool trick as at the defeat of the villain) *Robin Hood* addressed the audience with the potent line, "We ... never cheer at the death of any man," before resuming the action.

There are fight scenes with sword, dagger, staff and bow (arrows are represented by sound effects), as well as hand-to-hand combat, but these sequences are acrobatic and highly theatrical, often played for comedy with most injuries occurring on the buttocks.

For a full plot synopsis, see the [active audience guide](#). It is full of information about the story as well as guidance for discussing the story with kids.

## If you go...

**Where and when:** *Robin Hood* plays at the Seattle Children's Theatre until May 17. Performances are Thursdays and Fridays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 2 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., and Sundays at 11 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. The ASL-interpreted performance is on May 2 at 2 p.m.

**Length:** Running time is approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes, including intermission.

**Q&A:** Performers return to the stage after the performance for a guided discussion and a Q&A with the audience.

Although kids' questions tend to focus on how the props work, the actors' questions to the audience are well worth your time, as they help direct kids' attention to the play's themes of justice and everyday heroism.

**Tickets:** Prices vary by performance, ranging from \$20–\$40. Children's tickets are discounted. For the best prices, go on a Thursday night. [Buy online](#).

**Parking:** Seattle Children's Theatre has a [web page](#) dedicated to parking.