

## ‘Paddington Saves Christmas’ at Seattle Children’s Theatre gets squeals of laughter

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Kenon Veno (as Mr. Curry) and Paddington Bear in “Paddington Saves Christmas,” at Seattle Children’s Theatre through Dec. 31. (Truman Buffett / Seattle Children’s Theatre)

By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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## Theater review

After the hurdles families have faced during the past few years, an all-ages show full of laughs and low stakes like “Paddington Saves Christmas” could be exactly what we need to kick off the holiday season.

In this touring show, at Seattle Children’s Theatre [through the end of the year](#), two actors play opposite a large Paddington Bear puppet, which requires three puppeteers to move through the 70-minute production. The characters and many plot elements are drawn from the classic British picture books by Michael Bond, but compared to their understated tone, the play — created and directed by Jonathan Rockefeller — is a much more raucous and slapstick affair.

Rockefeller (creator of the theatrical adaptations “The Very Hungry Caterpillar” and “Sesame Street the Musical”) created an original story for the play “Paddington Gets in a Jam,” which opened Off Broadway in 2019, and closed with the rest of the theater world in March 2020. Now revived for a national tour, “Paddington Gets in a Jam” has been dressed up in a Christmas sweater for its monthlong holiday run in Seattle.

The basic plot remains unchanged: Paddington attempts to help his grumpy neighbor Mr. Curry, played by Kenon Veno, prepare for a visit from the eternally disapproving Great Aunt Matilda, performed by Casey Andrews. The accident-prone bear proceeds to destroy Mr. Curry’s house (a gorgeous dollhouse of a set designed to hide puppeteers Kyle Mahoney, Anthony White and Ricky Downes III) room by room in his attempts to tidy. But now, tinsel decorates Mr. Curry’s living room and Paddington is baking a Christmas cake.

It’s just enough holiday spirit to create a festive air and raise the stakes on Great Aunt Matilda’s visit. But there is no “Christmas is canceled” nadir and no heartfelt monologue à la Linus in Charlie Brown’s Christmas special. Nothing is set to rights by the end of the story; Christmas is saved simply because Paddington has made Great

Aunt Matilda laugh. And that's as close to a moral as you'll find. "Paddington Saves Christmas" is here to entertain, and the humor is aimed straight at its target audience: children ages 3 to 10 who can feel empowered by the fact that they know more about baking cakes and running a vacuum cleaner than Paddington does.

Adults will still find plenty to enjoy in the production. The set is a wonder, and the puppetry is impressive. Paddington's frequent refrain, "You have to look the part," provides a fun excuse to present the bear in numerous cute costumes (including his iconic peacoat and rain slicker outfits). There is certainly an element of nostalgia, too. After all, Paddington has been entertaining children for 60 years, so many grown viewers have fond childhood memories of familiar Paddington antics like applying wallpaper glue with his paws.

But for adults, watching the children watch the play will probably be the biggest joy. The squeals of childish laughter that rolled through the theater from youngsters' first encounters with live pratfalls and venerable gags like the cake-in-the-face would even make Great Aunt Matilda smile.

On opening night, when Mr. Curry cartoonishly proclaimed, "This is an emergency!" a tiny voice near the front row exclaimed, "Oh no!" And anyone who heard it shared a moment of peace and goodwill.

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### **"Paddington Saves Christmas"**

Through Dec. 31; Seattle Children's Theatre, 201 Thomas St., Seattle; \$30-\$45; masks required; 206-441-3322, [sct.org](http://sct.org)

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***Gemma Alexander** is a Seattle-based freelance writer; [gemmaealexander.com](http://gemmaealexander.com).*