

Take a magical musical journey Into The Woods

 By [Daniel Dercksen](#) 7 Jan 2015

Into the Woods is an enchanting musical that will cast its magical spell on you. It's one of those musical gems that's easy to fall in love with; besides its gorgeous melodies, witty lyrics and amusing storyline, it's a humorous and heartfelt musical that follows the classic tales of Cinderella (Anna Kendrick), Little Red Riding Hood (Lilla Crawford), Jack and the Beanstalk (Daniel Huttleston), and Rapunzel (MacKenzie Mauzy), all tied together by an original story involving a baker and his wife (James Corden and Emily Blunt), their wish to begin a family and their interaction with the witch (Meryl Streep), who has put a curse on them.

This highly anticipated big screen adaptation of a musical that gripped the imagination of the world since its first Broadway staging in 1987 was well worth the wait and delivers in spades, proving that wishes do indeed come true.



When Sondheim and Lapine first sat down to discuss Into The Woods, their intention was to create a provocative musical based in a fantasy world where the characters embarked on a quest - and they have succeeded in creating a beautiful, moving story with contemporary themes that are elegantly told through the classic characters of Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk, Rapunzel and Little Red Riding Hood, which collectively explore what happens after 'happily ever after'.

A super-sensational spectacle

Celebrating the genius of lyricist Lapine (who also wrote the crackling screenplay) and legendary composer Sondheim, it's a super-sensational spectacle in the hands of visionary director Rob Marshall, whose instinctive flair for musical theatre was applauded with the Oscar-winning big screen adaptations of the musicals Chicago and Nine.

Following in the tradition of musicals like the film version of Les Miserables that honour their source material, Marshall's sharp perception of musical theatre results in an adaptation that does not try to reinvent the original, but amplifies its splendour magnificently.

Lapine and Sondheim also reworked the stage production to shape a perfect end result; the structural changes in the narrative quicken the pace and avoid the repetitious nature of the two-act stage musical.

The timing of its release could not have been better. With the huge success and following of the television series' *Once Upon A Time* and *Grimm*, and films like *Red Riding Hood*, *Jack The Slayer* and *Maleficent*, fairy tales have become a part of our modern culture.

Audiences are now more familiar with fairy tales and their characters than ever before, and with *Into The Woods* they will be astounded by the imaginative telling of *Into The Woods*, which was way ahead of its time.



The everlasting power of magic

To tell a story about the everlasting power of magic we have to believe in magic, and with *Into The Woods* its spectacular realisation and visual splendour fully amplify the fantasy; the world of *Into The Woods* fully encapsulates the richly textured world of fairy tales and their vibrant characters.

Into The Woods is a rich musical with harmonious melodies that burn into your memory. You will most definitely be singing the title song long after leaving the cinema and will always remember the haunting refrain of *Children Will Listen*.

It's music that seduces the senses with its witty lyrics, sharp humour and splendid subtext, perfectly brought to life by its heavenly ensemble.

The darkness and melancholy of the witch's contemplation (another winning performance from Meryl Streep), is well contrasted with comedic scenes like the hilarious duet of Cinderella's Prince Charming and Rapunzel's dashing Prince, with Chris Pine and Billy Magnussen in top form. Streep's rendition of *Stay With Me* is sure to garner an Oscar nomination.

James Corden is fantastic as the baker who is desperate to rescind a curse, with Emily Blunt as his tenacious and determined wife who is willing to go to any lengths to get what she wants.

There are also great performances from Tracey Ullman as Jack's poor, exasperated mother who dreams a life free from poverty, with Daniel Huttleston (who charmed audiences as Gavroche in the Academy Award-winning musical *Les Miserables*) as the carefree Jack who yearns for adventure, delivering a superb rendition of *Giants In The Sky*.



Another brilliant performance

Johnny Depp, who was sensational in Sondheim's musical *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, gives another brilliant performance as the wolf, a feral, unguarded and animalistic creature that delivers the utterly wicked Hello Little Girl, seducing Little Red Riding Hood.

The role of Cinderella, who wishes to go to the King's Festival, is more modern, complicated and flawed than the iconic character with whom audiences are most familiar, and features Anna Kendrick delivering the glorious *On The Steps Of The Palace*.

Christine Baranski, who was great in Marshall's *Chicago*, is at her best as Cinderella's wicked stepmother, with Tammy Blanchard and Lucy Punch as Cinderella's evil stepsisters.

No matter how often you've seen *Into The Woods*, it's a world you can easily escape into and take a thrilling journey into a world where anything can happen, and indeed does.

There are great surprises behind every tree and new revelations every step of the way.

It's a musical that skilfully lures you into its allure and mystery, and, once it takes hold of you, it never lets go. It's not just a story about fairy tales, but poignantly reflects the human condition and is extremely relevant to our lives today where everyone yearns for acceptance and love, needs to be compassionate, and must find their own unique way through the darkness that sometimes clouds our dreams, hopes and aspirations.

The early days of recorded history

Fairy tales date back to the early days of recorded history and have been passed down from generation to generation ever since. While, on the surface, their intention may appear solely as a source of entertainment they also serve as an important tool on an educational and emotional level due to the insight they offer as to the human journey.

They show how important it is for us to confront our troubles, venture into the world and overcome our fears, explore our fantasies, and make the most of the journey we have chosen to follow.

In the words of Streep: "Fairy tales evolved as cautionary tales. They were told to scare children away from the dangers they would encounter in their lives and to encourage young women to marry rich men. Everyone is encouraged to find a prince and live happily ever after, and sometimes it doesn't work that way."

Pine concurs: "In many ways this film is about growing up, as the characters learn how spectacular life can be in all its forms and manifestations. It's about discovering the world."

Don't hesitate to take a journey into these magical woods, it's an adventure you will most definitely take home with you, and one you will want to share with friends and loved ones.

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercksen has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and the journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za
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