

Review

MUSIC
ICE

★★★★☆
Kings Place, London

COMMISSIONED by The Hertfordshire Chorus to mark the 100th anniversary of the first expedition to the North Pole, Orlando Gough's choral piece *Ice* is filled with barks, language, diary entries, vibraphone and drums. It looks amusingly bizarre on paper but sounds majestic, heartily surprising and melodic when performed.

Enveloped with a dose of Steve Reich-echoing mini-voices, instruments and uplifting narration by Mike Henry overlap, bounce off each other in and out in waves.

The words are lifted from the diary of Matthew Henson, a black American who accompanied Robert Peary on the trip, and the surrounding whistles, clicks and whirls succeed in whisking the audience away from a concert hall to the freezing, historic moment.

The complexity of the score creates the occasional hiccup from the choir, but the pace is so quick that most people at its world premiere failed to notice. The final section, set to a never-endingly escalating yips, relates current climate change issues and oil struggles to the past. It's unnecessary and marginally cringe-inducing finale but does not take away from what deserves to be a regularly performed and celebrated composition.

Reviews

THEATRE
SCRIMSHAW

★★★★☆
Pump House Theatre

NEW writing and a pirate play to boot, *Scrimshaw* performed by the Pump House Children and Youth Theatre, promised a good family night out with its mix of mistaken identities,

hidden treasure and high seas adventure.

The story interweaves the lives of four very different people who are thrown together by their father's legacy. So it is that lovestruck chambermaid Megan (Alice Stevenson), diminutive Pascal (Corinne Swallow) the son of a French courtesan, courageous but duplicitous sailor Diego (Matt Slomka) and black-hearted blaggard Rufus (Adam Feighoney) end up on a galleon bound for a mysterious island where a pile of pirate gold big enough to turn their fortunes around lies buried.

To give more away would spoil the fun of this inventive and highly entertaining show, which features good songs, especially the rousing ditty *Hispaniola* and a host of enjoyable characters. Though the copy editor in me was desperate to trim away a little of the first act and I strained to hear the dialogue over the superfluous Mediterranean accents, Karen Rhodes' highly original play combines some healthy realism with delightful fantasy – I hope it has the sealegs to go on and on.

Given that there are two extremely accomplished casts of Pump House regulars, I'll just point out newcomers Matt Slomka, astonishingly good in what is only his second theatrical performance and Alice Stevenson who gave real depth to the leading lady.

Lucy Houbart's ingenious set, meanwhile, held it all together, transforming from ship's galley to tavern to stately ballroom and back again.

Melanie Dakin

WHAT

Classes &

● Speech and Language
Every Mon, 10am

Rickmansworth Children's Centre, Shepherds Lane, Rickmansworth. Qualified Speech and Language Therapist. This fun and interactive session is for two-four years and three. Action songs, musical games and puppets are used to develop communication skills. All parents receive a leaflet to take home. £10 for full session. Book with the Children's Centre on 772094.

● Trim Tots – Research
Every Thu, 10am

South Oxhey Sure Start Children's Centre (Wood Primary School), South Oxhey, Watford. A free fun weekly session for children under five years old. Slightly overweight or obese children and their children may be eligible. Includes music, movement and a free activity pack. Details on 020 7905 2805.

Clubs & societies

● Friends of Knutsford
River Park

Thu, Jan 29, 7.30am. Radlett Road Allotment, Radlett. The agenda is to discuss the 2009 work plan for the park. Book on 0796 2009.