The Book of Everything

Rebeca Wallin

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

This Play Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Play Review

Title: The Book of Everything
Author: Richard Tulloch
Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin
Publisher: Plays for Young Audiences
Publication Year: 2010
Number of Pages: 106
Production Requirements: Several outdoor and indoor settings, period costumes, realistic props

Estimated Run Time: 2 hours
Number of Acts: 2
Number of Characters: 9
Cast Requirements: 3 men, 5 women
Time Period: 1951
Reading/Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Excellent

Review

When Thomas grows up he wants to be—happy. This admirable goal does not quite seem achievable in the opening act of the play. Based on the book of the same name by Guus Kuijer, this play shows Thomas living in post WWII Amsterdam with his loving mother and domineering, violent father. The family is expected to adhere to the strict rules of their father’s Christian faith and rule breaking or mistakes are severely punished. This punishment extends to the abuse of Thomas’s mother. Despite the grim circumstances that he lives in Thomas takes comfort in his mother’s love and the wild imaginative flights of fancy he is prone to. Thomas, his mother and his older sister, aided by a friendly neighbor, are finally able to stand up to father’s bullying and create a new life for themselves that may lead to happiness. This play won the AATE (American Alliance for Theatre and Education) Distinguished Play Award for 2015.

The story is beautifully adapted with strong, sometimes poetic dialogue and interesting, well-developed characters (with the exception of the rather one-note father character). The play provides audience members a powerful experience that will tug at heartstrings and invoke deep, critical thought. The heavy subject matter calls for an older “young” audience and might best be viewed with parents ready to engage in a post-show discussion. Controversial subject matter should be noted including beatings, domestic abuse and the vilifying of organized religion. The character of Jesus who appears throughout as a character visible only to Thomas should be noted as he is portrayed as a friendly but somewhat powerless man without a connection to God. This play contains mild language and moderate violence.