

So Much More Than Entertainment By Lindsay Mak

Today in 2019, we find the world becoming a more and more difficult place to live in. In a world full of so much conflict, we sometimes buy into the feeling that there is nothing we as individuals can do to change it. We lose touch of the world around us and become trapped in a world that is the internet. Technology makes it easier for people, especially young people, to be ignorant of humanity and society around them. However, live theatre today has become a medium for people to be reminded of their ability to put their convictions into action. Characters such as the bold Matilda Wormwood show us examples of how to implement these actions into our lives. There is simply something about live performances that reminds us to put down the phone and find our inner strength.

If you ask most teenagers, they will probably say they've never been to live theatre. Today, kids only have to type a couple words into their phone or laptop to watch anything. What kids don't realize is that by actually going to watch a live performance, they are forced to enter a bigger world outside of their little screens. Unfortunately, students simply don't have proper access to live performances. I have been graciously given the opportunity to take part in my high school theatre criticism course, and I can say that without a doubt I have been inspired and changed by the messages of the several live performances I've attended. I find the lack of access to live theatre for students disheartening. Live performances are capable of teaching and inspiring young people, the next generation, in an amazing way that will live with them throughout the rest of their lives. There is something simply magical about drama performances, there's no other way to describe it, and so many young people are unable to have access. Theatre enables young people to tap into their unlimited creative potential and it encourages young people to simply be themselves. There is something about live theatre that doesn't translate to a classroom or a smartphone.

Theatre has been a part of society for generations, but as the years go by we are seeing that it is having a smaller role. We live in a time where the arts aren't valued and coming up with a great new product or business, or who wins the MBA becomes priority. Before, theatre would be a means of expression and creation, now it's seen as merely entertainment and possible a waste of time and money. But theatre is so much more than that. Live performances give people the opportunity to be creative and find ways to discuss serious topics. It provides us with a reflection of the world as we know it and think about what we can do to make this world better. Theatre allows us to reflect how we see the world and show others what we think the world can be. I think that in today's day and age, all we need is a little mix of hope, imagination, and reality. People sometimes miss out on the things that truly matter, and live performances help people to get in touch with those things. Watching live performances gives us the reality check we need but pushes us to act on our convictions. Theatre is no longer simply entertainment. Theatre has the power to change the world.

Theatre allows us to tell important stories and messages, and *Matilda* did just that. A story where one little girl changed the status quo, and acted according to what she believed was right. This simple message of doing right is relevant in the life of every single person. *Matilda* proved that your age, your gender, or your background don't matter if you want to make a difference. As Matilda sings, "Even if you're little, you can do a lot," she shows the world that every person has the potential to do something great. This message is universal, and has been told in so many different ways in live theatre, but the production of *Matilda* is captivating to all audiences and is portrayed in a relatable and modern way. This would typically be seen as a children's show, but because it has a message understandable to kids, it's definitely something that adult audiences can understand as well. "Just because you find that life's not fair, doesn't mean that you just have to grin and bear it." This is a powerful message that encourages all people to make a difference in this world, and I think that's so important for people to realize, especially in today's society where there's so much chaos. It inspires kids and adults alike to find their inner strength and stand up to the Miss. Trunchbulls in their lives. The world needs more shows like *Matilda* that can inspire and speak to all people.

In conclusion, I believe that all people, especially teenagers ought to have the opportunity to experience the magic that is live theatre. Exposure to the arts is so critical in the lives of young people, as well as the rest of society. Teenagers are the next generation and they need to be inspired by the transformative powers of theatre. Live theatre allows us to truly remember what's important in life and get away from the business of everyday life. It has the ability to impact the lives of so many, just like a little girl named Matilda was able to do in the lives of people around her. The power of live theatre is so much bigger than we can ever really know.