

Giraffes Can't Dance (tour – Chelmsford)

Venue: [Civic Theatre](#)

Where: Chelmsford

Date Reviewed: 2 November 2009

WOS Rating: ★★★★★

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Bringing a child's illustrated story-book to life is not as simple a task as you might think. The touring company Blunderbus has a formula for this which does seem to work; keeping an audience of the four to seven age groups enthralled for a whole hour with only three actors is the proof.

Giraffes Can't Dance is a book by poet [Giles Andreae](#) with illustrations by [Guy Parker-Rees](#). It's a jungle story with a message about bullying and discrimination carefully – and subtly – built in. Designer [Cherry Knight](#) offers us a setting which suggests the bright colours of book illustration but leaves plenty of room for the action. The performers manipulate the head-pieces, rod puppets, masks and extraneous limbs of the different animals to make them individual and recognisable while never being threatening.

The adaptation is by [Bill Davies](#) with music and lyrics by [Frank Goodhind](#).. The narrator is a chirpy cricket ([Teoni Woodward](#)) and the long-legged, accident-prone hero is Gerald, the giraffe who is plagued by the chimps, the anteater and the lions but eventually persuades them all that he can indeed dance, only to a different measure. [Jeanette Longworth](#) gives him vulnerability as well as flexibility. *Kings of the jungle they may be but the lions, led by [Claire Alizon](#), are Hollywood-accented beasts and not to be taken too seriously. All three actresses mingle with the audience both before the show and at certain points in the action. Even the smallest children accepted the beautifully crafted head-pieces at face value, even close-up. The adults enjoyed the skill; the youngsters just enjoyed themselves.*

- by [Anne Morlwy-Priestman](#)



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