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A lovely show for children

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Some puppet shows feature a few catchy sing-along tunes while others tell a good story. British Blunderbus Theatre Company deserves a pat on its back for managing to combine both in *The Selfish Crocodile*.



Claire Alizon Hills plays the wildebeest in *The Selfish Crocodile*.

The plot, based on Faustin Charles's best-selling book, is about a group of forest animals (think: a herd of gazelles, hippos, wildebeest, giraffes and lions) that are frightened of a selfish crocodile.

Narrated by Mouse (Bill Davies), it tells of the eponymous reptile that will not let anyone drink from the river. Those attempting to trespass his territory will end up in his jaws.

One day, the crocodile finds himself in agony because of a toothache. Good-hearted Mouse overcomes his fear and bravely extracts the molar from the crocodile's mouth. Grateful, the crocodile learns the meaning of friendship and welcomes the animals to the river as buddies.

Targeted at children between four and seven years old, the show is currently being staged at The Actors Studio Bangsar in Kuala Lumpur until April 27.

Before a recent 50-minute show kicked off, the puppeteers, who sported dungarees (with colourful patches), went around to find out children's names and included them in their narrative to make it seem as if they were old buddies.

Using mask-style paper mache puppets, puppeteers Claire Alizon Hills and Jeannette Longworth took turns bouncing on stage as a scruffy wildebeest, giraffe, crocodile and lion. Their movements were rather comical and this in return had the young audiences in stitches.

Christian Knott, who played the lead character, did a fairly good job as a fearsome crocodile.

To make the show interesting, the puppeteers enticed the audience with the bright hues of their jungle set and *wayang kulit*-style shadow puppetry on a screen set in the midst of jungle scenery.

Although the show is targeted at the young, it was fun to watch, as the puppeteers seemed genuine in their storytelling.

Blunderbus proved to be a hit as their simple storytelling managed to keep the children and adults happy.

Not only did the show touch on morality, it also taught children positive messages like honesty, helping one another, and doing good deeds. It also reminds kids that sometimes the smallest acts of kindness are the ones that often have the greatest impact.

o The Selfish Crocodile *shows at 10am, 11am and 3pm on selected days. There are no shows on April 21, April 22 or April 24. For more information, call (03) 2094 0400/1400 or visit www.theactorsstudio.com.my or <http://gardnerandwife.com>*