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# Review: Frosty the Snowman offers fun, tender holiday show

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By Sarah Lindenfeld Hall

We all know the story of Frosty the Snowman.

He was the jolly, happy old soul with a corncob pipe who came alive one day when kids placed an old silk hat on top of his head. Many of us probably have the 1969 animated version of the classic queued up to watch this month. The show focuses on Frosty and the kids getting tangled up in some antics with Professor Hinkle, a magician.

The musical version of Frosty playing at the Duke Energy Center for Performing Arts in Raleigh this month tells a different version of the tale.

Frosty still has that corncob pipe, magic hat and broom in hand. But, this time, he's sent from the North Pole to help Billy, a homeless boy who has run away from an orphanage and asked Santa for a home and family for Christmas. As luck would have it, Billy makes his home on a bench right next to the general store of mean old Mr. Gardner, who lost his own son and wife and has no plans for Christmas. The plot unfolds from there.

The hour-long show, with a 15-minute intermission 30 minutes in, is designed from start to finish for kids and their families. With big numbers and smaller moments, it tells a sweet story that's laugh out loud funny at times and tender at others. My girls, ages 8 and 4, loved it. (I'm trying not to be worried that my younger daughter is now pretending that she is an orphan like Billy.)

The set features a small town square with a Christmas tree at the center. There's a group of kids who build the snowman and find the hat that a beleaguered Santa (Phil Crone), with a point of view most parents could relate to this time of year, had sent for Frosty.

The show really comes to life when set magic eventually reveals the live Frosty, played by Greensboro native Jonathan Cobrda, who majored in musical theater at Western Carolina University. Fun fact: His mom, Pauline Cobrda, also is on stage.

The younger Cobrda, dressed in a satiny, bedazzled white tuxedo with tails, jumps onto stage with energy and enthusiasm. His face screws into all sorts of expressions. And, as Frosty, he occasionally makes side comments that parents will probably appreciate more than the kids.

But like many local theater productions, the kids are the stand outs too, including Noah Zevin, a Raleigh fourth grader, who plays Billy, a boy down on his luck, but still hopeful, and Rachel Gross, whose singing talent stands out as she portrays Julie, a character who helps to move the story along (like ensuring there are big musical numbers at the start and finish to round out the show).

The show is part of the Storybook Theater series, a collaboration between Marbles Kids Museum and the Duke Energy Center. It's the brainchild of Jim Lavery, general manager of the Duke energy Center, and Wally Jones, former CEO of N.C. Theatre. Jones is now in Texas as president and executive producer of Casa Manana, which features self-produced and Broadway shows, along with a vibrant children's performance

series. Read [my earlier post](#) for more about the series.

"Frosty the Snowman" is the final show in the inaugural season of the Storybook Theater series for family audiences. Next season launches on Jan. 22 with "Pinkalicious: The Musical."

Tickets start at just \$14 for "Frosty." It runs through Dec. 24 with multiple showtimes on weekdays and weekends. **Click here** for details and to get your tickets.

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## CREDITS

**Reporter** [Sarah Lindenfeld Hall](#)

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