



Show Report

Tameside Youth Drama Group
Into The Woods Jr.

09 July 2026

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

PRODUCTION	Into The Woods Jr.
SOCIETY	Tameside Youth Drama Group
VENUE	Hyde Festival Theatre
GENRE	Musical
CAST SIZE	54
DIRECTOR	Rachel Bunting
CHOREOGRAPHERS	Victoria Husband, Becci Alberti-King & Katie Dearnaley
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Katie Wilkins
COSTUMES	Carole Levy
ASSISTED BY	Becci Alberti-King
TREASURER	Janet Butterworth
STAGE MANAGER	Rachel Bunting
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Victoria Husband
STAGE CREW	Dave Husband
SET DESIGN & PROPS	Victoria Husband & Rachel Bunting
SOUND TECHNICIANS	Sparks Theatre Management
LIGHTING TECHNICIANS	Sparks Theatre Management
PROGRAMME	Becci Alberti-King
VIDEOGRAPHER	JHC Video Services - Phil Steels
SAFEGUARDING LEAD	Victoria Husband
LEAD CHAPERONE	Carole Levy
CHAPERONES	TYDG Team, Parents and Carers
FRONT OF HOUSE	Hyde Festival Theatre Volunteers

CAST LIST

Narrator	June Moore
Baker	Ned Evans
Baker's Wife	Freya Sibson (understudied by Emelia Green)
Cinderella	Poppy Adamson
Cinderella's Mother	Scarlett Clarke
Cinderella's Stepmother	Célestielle Rugero-Birch
Cinderella's Father	James Minshull
Florinda	Evelyn Earnshaw
Lucinda	Rénee Flowers

Cinderella's Prince	Freddie Shaw
Jack	Bella-Rose Taylor
Jack's Mother	Erin Kay
Milky-White	James Earnshaw
Witch	Ava Evans
Little Red Riding Hood	Jorgie-Leigh Dodd
Granny	Macie Jones
Mysterious Man	Harry Melling
Rapunzel	Maisie Stevens
Rapunzel's Prince	Michael Brickell
Steward	Grace Lonie
Wolf	George Partington

JUNIOR ENSEMBLE

Amelia Fagan
 Annabelle Taylor
 Blake Powell-Knowles
 Emelia Killick
 Halle Ellwood-Morton
 Hannah Sibson
 Henry Hobson
 James Earnshaw
 Lilly Harvey
 Lydia Park
 Matilda Jones
 Meraya Armstrong
 Naomi Cooley
 Robyn Neary
 Rory Feeley
 Sienna Scrymgeour
 Sophie Clarke
 Sophie Duggan
 Thea Kennedy
 Tristan Campbell

SENIOR ENSEMBLE

Aurélie Cizero-Birch
 Bella Doyle
 Bella Grant
 Daisy Griffiths
 Emelia Green

Emie Ellwood
Jacob Dickinson
Lolly Atkins
Noah Hembury
Reeva Flowers
Ronan Edwards
Shantel Clarke
Skye Clarke
Veda Mae McDonald

DATE OF PERFORMANCE	Thursday 9th July 2026
DATE REPORT PUBLISHED	Friday 10th July 2026
ADJUDICATOR ID	NSA0003

NSA LOGO ON POSTER	Yes
NSA IN PROGRAMME	Yes
PROGRAMME CLASS	Original Licensed Basic

THE REVIEW

REVIEW WORD COUNT

2078

STRONGEST ELEMENTS

The Heart of the Story

- **June Moore's** performance as the Narrator was the glue that held the production together. Guiding the audience through Sondheim's intricate story with warmth, charisma and unwavering focus, June delivered a standout performance that kept the fairy tales flowing from beginning to end.

The Living Woods

- The decision to create a senior ensemble proved inspired. Becoming the very spirit of the forest, they added atmosphere, movement and even the gentle *susurrus* of the enchanted woods, transforming scene changes into part of the storytelling rather than simply moments between scenes.

Bold Choices, Big Rewards

- Choosing *Into the Woods Jr.* was an ambitious decision for a youth company, but one that paid off. Stephen Sondheim's demanding score pushed every performer, and while the musical's complexity was evident, so too was the cast's determination, teamwork and willingness to challenge themselves.

The weather might have been hotter than the surface of the sun and the nation gripped by football fever, but one thing is certain: an evening at the theatre is never a bad choice. My guests and I were delighted to be invited to *Hyde Festival Theatre* to watch **Tameside Youth Drama Group's** production of *Into the Woods Jr.*, a musical bursting with fairy tale magic, memorable characters and adventure.

As always, we received a warm welcome from the wonderful **Hyde Festival Theatre volunteers**, who generously give up their time to support both the venue and the many groups that call it home. Before taking our seats, we met **Katie Dearnaley** and Principal, **Rachel Bunting**, our hosts for the evening, who shared an insight into how the cast of 54 were feeling as they prepared for opening night in the soaring summer temperatures.

Katie and Rachel explained that the cast had chosen *Into the Woods Jr.* as their summer musical. With its fast-paced dialogue, intricate lyrics and much-loved fairy tale characters, it is no easy undertaking. Yet they spoke proudly of how every member of the company had embraced the challenge, taken ownership of the production and worked together to bring this magical story to life.

With a cast of 54, space on stage was understandably at a premium, so the decision to keep the set relatively minimal proved an effective one. Designed by [Victoria Husband](#) and Rachel Bunting, raised platforms dressed in grass and foliage added depth to the woodland setting while allowing key characters to be elevated when required.

One feature unique to Hyde Festival Theatre is its "ashtrays" – small performance areas positioned either side of the main stage (if anyone knows how they earned that nickname, answers on a postcard, please!). One was cleverly transformed into Rapunzel's tower, while the other provided an additional entrance and exit point, allowing the cast to move seamlessly through the auditorium and adding another dimension to the storytelling.

I particularly liked that the cast took responsibility for moving many of the props and smaller set pieces themselves, allowing backstage crew Rachel Bunting, Victoria Husband and [Dave Husband](#) to focus on the larger scene changes. Inevitably, with 54 performers, limited backstage space and soaring temperatures, some transitions took a little longer than others. Even so, the crew kept everything moving efficiently throughout.

Costumes, coordinated by [Carole Levy](#) with assistance from [Becci Alberti-King](#), gave every character a distinct identity. I was especially taken with Cinderella's sparkling ballgown, which perfectly captured the magic of the role. A special mention must also go to Carole, who we learned had undergone an operation in the weeks leading up to the production but still insisted on overseeing the costumes. It was a wonderful example of the dedication shown by the volunteers working tirelessly behind the scenes.

Lighting, sound and pyrotechnics were provided by [Sparks Theatre Management](#) and, having seen several productions supported by their technical team, I have come to expect a high standard. The lighting subtly shifted and pulsed to create the impression of sunlight filtering through the woods, while carefully chosen colour washes reflected the mood of each scene without ever distracting from the action.

As with many opening-night performances involving a large cast, there were the occasional microphone issues. These were resolved promptly and never detracted from the performance. Credit must also go to the cast, who remained in character and projected confidently whenever needed. The atmospheric effects added another layer to the production, from the low-lying smoke that created an eerie woodland setting to the well-timed pyrotechnics accompanying the Witch's spells. I'll happily admit I jumped every single time!

Leading the audience through the intertwining fairy tales was [June Moore](#) as the Narrator. Warm, engaging and full of character, June kept the story moving with confidence, effortlessly drawing the audience into the magical world of *Into the Woods Jr.* Arguably one of the most demanding roles in the production, the Narrator requires constant movement while maintaining the pace and clarity of the story. June embraced this challenge superbly, commanding the audience's attention throughout and reminding me of a travelling Renaissance bard sharing tales around a campfire. It was a standout performance.

Ned Evans gave a composed performance as the Baker, delivering his dialogue with conviction and developing a believable rapport with Freya Sibson as the Baker's Wife and the wider cast. On a handful of occasions, some emotional moments felt a little stronger than perhaps intended, although this seemed more a stylistic choice than anything else. Overall, Ned captured the Baker's gradual journey from uncertainty to self-belief with sincerity.

Freya Sibson portrayed the Baker's Wife with determination and warmth, combining clear diction with expressive facial expressions that allowed the audience to connect with her character. Vocally, she produced a lovely tone throughout and, as her confidence continues to grow, I'd love to hear her lean even further into those higher notes, elevating an already enjoyable performance.

Poppy Adamson gave a sincere and likeable performance as Cinderella, capturing the character's kindness and humility with ease. She delivered her dialogue with warmth and sincerity, while her rendition of *On the Steps of the Palace* showcased a lovely vocal tone and engaging storytelling. Cinderella's Stepmother and Stepsisters, Florinda and Lucinda, played by **Celestielle Rugero-Birch**, **Evelyn Earnshaw** and **Renee Flowers**, created a wonderfully over-the-top trio. They fully embraced the vanity, selfishness and comic chaos of their characters, bouncing off one another. **Scarlett Clarke** gave a gentle, thoughtful performance as Cinderella's Mother. Her understated approach suited the character well and brought a quiet warmth whenever she appeared.

Bella-Rose Taylor embraced the role of Jack with a clear understanding of the character and knowledge of both dialogue and staging. As confidence continues to grow, maintaining eye contact with fellow performers and occasionally connecting with the audience a little more would allow Jack's personality to shine even more naturally. A special mention must go to **James Earnshaw** as Milky White. Despite having no dialogue beyond a perfectly timed "moo", James remained completely committed to the role from beginning to end. It would have been easy for the character to drift into pantomime territory, particularly during the more comedic moments, but James showed admirable restraint and stayed fully in character throughout. Roles like this are often overlooked, yet they require just as much concentration and commitment as those with pages of dialogue.

Erin Kay gave an assured performance as Jack's mother, capturing both the character's strength and deep concern for her son. Erin spoke with authority and conviction, and I particularly enjoyed the believable transition from the exasperated parent frustrated by Jack's decision to sell Milky White to the genuinely worried mother desperately searching for her missing son.

Ava Evans relished every moment as the formidable Witch, bringing commanding stage presence, expressive characterisation and energy to the role. Ava had clearly spent time developing her interpretation, balancing menace with the character's underlying vulnerability. During some of the dialogue-heavy sections at the beginning of the show a few words were lost as the pace increased, but this quickly settled. I was particularly impressed by the progress Ava has made with her higher register since previous productions; the improvement was noticeable and contributed to an assured performance.

Maisie Stevens gave a warm and endearing performance as Rapunzel, impressing with her natural reactive acting and the way she listened and responded to those around her. As her confidence continues to grow, I'd love to see her lean even further into Rapunzel's emotional journey, making the transition from sheltered young girl to independent woman even more defined. Her commitment to the role was evident throughout, and she should be proud of the performance she delivered.

Jorgie-Leigh Dodd delighted as Little Red Riding Hood, bringing plenty of personality to the role. Her confidence grew noticeably as the performance progressed, she moved naturally around the stage and developed believable relationships with the other characters, making Little Red an engaging presence throughout. **George Partington** fully committed to the role of the Wolf, and special credit must be given for performing in a full wolf mask during an exceptionally warm evening. While the costume understandably affected vocal clarity during the early scenes, this improved as the performance progressed, allowing his characterisation and sense of fun to shine through. It was a committed performance under particularly challenging conditions. Making the most of her cameo as Granny was **Macie Jones**. Although not a singing role, she certainly made an impression, particularly during her determined attempt to ensure the Wolf was truly defeated. Delivering her dialogue with conviction, Macie embraced the character's fearless spirit.

Freddie Shaw and **Michael Brickell** made a wonderfully entertaining pairing as Cinderella's Prince and Rapunzel's Prince. Their chemistry was good, allowing the comedy to land naturally without either performer trying to overshadow the other, and their musical number was full of character.

I would also like to commend Freddie for his stage awareness during scenes with **Gracie Lonie** as the Steward. Not because Gracie needed any assistance, she was confident throughout, but because Freddie subtly ensured they remained well positioned for the audience. It was a small detail that many may not have noticed, but it demonstrated excellent teamwork and a real understanding that theatre is about supporting those around you just as much as delivering your own performance.

Harry Melling clearly relished the role, making excellent use of the eerie vocal effect that accompanied many of his appearances. At times, he seemed keen to lean into the audience's reactions, which occasionally softened the mystery of the character. Even so, he knew his cues well, remained committed to the role and played an important part in guiding the story forward.

Traditionally, *Into the Woods Jr.* doesn't feature a dedicated ensemble, so the decision to create one for this production was both bold and imaginative. The **Junior Ensemble** brought energy and life to the villagers, supporting several musical numbers with choreography by **Victoria Husband**, **Becci Alberti-King** and **Katie Dearnaley**. The routines suited the performers well and, perhaps most importantly, it was obvious they were having enormous fun. A special mention goes to **Lilly Harvey** and **Sienna Scrymgeour**, whose confidence and enthusiasm particularly caught my eye. Both performed with infectious energy and knew their

choreography and lyrics exceptionally well, especially during the finale. That said, the entire Junior Ensemble made a valuable contribution and should be incredibly proud of what they achieved.

The [Senior Ensemble](#) took a very different approach, becoming part of the woods themselves rather than simply appearing in crowd scenes. Like woodland spirits, they remained a constant presence, their movement creating the gentle susurrus of an enchanted forest as they supported scene changes and key moments such as the Wolf's encounter with Little Red Riding Hood. It was a wonderfully creative piece of staging that strengthened the storytelling while giving every performer a meaningful role. The ensemble worked seamlessly together, but it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge [Skye Clarke](#). We were told Skye had also assisted with elements of the set and choreography, demonstrating a maturity and commitment beyond performing alone. It is clear Skye has all the qualities of an excellent future group leader.

A production like *Into the Woods Jr.* simply wouldn't be possible without a dedicated Musical Director, and [Katie Wilkins](#) deserves enormous credit for the work she has invested in this company. Stephen Sondheim's score is famously demanding, with fast-paced patter songs, intricate harmonies and shifting time signatures requiring precision from every performer. This is a challenge for experienced adult performers, let alone a youth company ranging from six to eighteen years old. While the musical demands occasionally showed, they never detracted from the production. Instead, what shone through was the cast's determination, commitment and willingness to challenge themselves. Katie has clearly nurtured not only their musical ability but also their belief in themselves, and the result was a company that should be immensely proud of its achievement.

Congratulations to everyone involved, both on and off the stage, for delivering such an enjoyable evening of theatre. From the talented young cast to the dedicated volunteers, production team and supporters behind the scenes, the passion and commitment invested in this production was evident from beginning to end. Thank you to [Tameside Youth Drama Group](#) and Hyde Festival Theatre for your warm hospitality. We wish you every success with the remainder of the run and look forward to returning in January 2027 to see what magical adventures await in *Aladdin*.

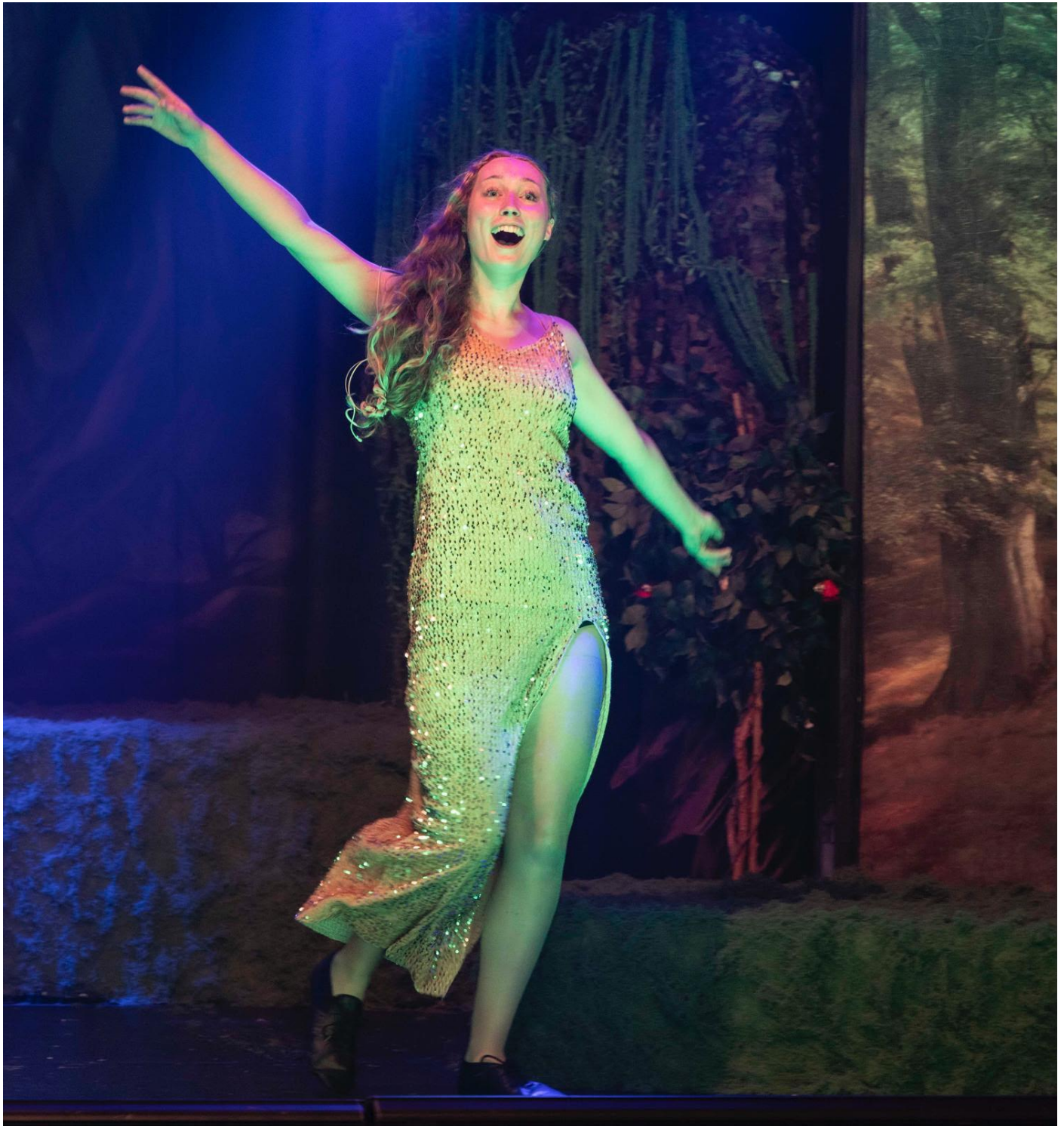
PHOTOGRAPHS













PROGRAMME




**TAMESIDE YOUTH
DRAMA GROUP**

Presents...

**INTO
THE
WOODS
JR.**

Thursday 9th July – Saturday 11th July 2026

**Souvenir
Programme**

 **HYDE
Festival
THEATRE**

 **act**

 **Sparks**

 **Northern
Stage
AWARDS**

Book by Music and Lyrics by James Lapine Stephen Sondheim
Originally Directed on Broadway by James Lapine
This amateur production is presented by arrangement with Music Theatre International
All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI - www.mtishows.co.uk