



1 For the fourth year in a row, Upstarts Youth Theatre Company held its *Playtime!* festival at the Reddington Entertainment Centre. Running over last Saturday and Sunday, the festival showcased new talent from the Reddington Shire Council. Each year, Upstarts selects one playwright under fifteen and turns his or her winning script into a complete theatrical production. This year the winner was fourteen-year-old Grace Hynes. Her play, *The Apple Worm*, wowed audiences.

2 *The Apple Worm* is set in a fruit-canning factory. While Grace has not set it in a particular time, the props and costumes depicted the 1930s. The main character is Martha, a young girl who works in the factory to support her poor family. She has lied about her age so she can work there. One day, while preparing fruit to put into cans, Martha finds a blue worm inside an apple. Finding it very beautiful, she keeps it in a matchbox to make her feel happy while she works. However,

things are not going well at the factory, and it is threatened with closure. If this happens, it could be disastrous for Martha's family.

3 Grace's use of language is outstanding. When her characters speak, it sounds like real people are talking. There are also some very poetic moments, such as when Martha describes how happy the blue worm makes her. If there was one problem with the writing, it was that sometimes Grace made things too easy for her characters. For example, when Martha is found to have lied about her age, she is not fired. Instead, she apologises and returns back to work. This seemed a little unrealistic.

4 There are some great themes explored in *The Apple Worm*. The main one is the idea of hope, and how it can make us happy no matter how bad our situation might be. Another is the power of imagination. On stage, the blue worm appears as a puppet the size of a child's arm. It doesn't speak, but it does funny things, such as dressing up in Martha's bonnet when she is upset. Grace doesn't make it clear if this really happens or if Martha imagines it. Most of the audience believed that it was Martha's imagination, because the rest of the play seemed very real.

5 Another significant theme of *The Apple Worm* is money. It is important to all of the characters in the play. Sometimes this is because they are very poor, such as Martha's family. Other times it is because they are greedy and care about it more than other people. Grace makes a powerful statement about how money is something we have to deal with in our lives, but that we shouldn't let it take us over.

6 Congratulations should be given to all the children who acted in the production. They were all students from Upstarts and did very well. *The Apple Worm* was actually the first time Michael Jantz had ever performed in front of an audience. He played Martha's younger brother, and was funny and believable. By far, the best performance was by Danica Vella, who stunned everyone with her portrayal of Martha. She outshone the adult actors in the production.

7 *The Apple Worm* also had a well-designed set. It was made from wood and canvas, but had been painted to look like metal and concrete. Sometimes, it was possible to see the walls ripple in a draught, but this wasn't too distracting. The back wall of the canning factory was attached to ropes in the roof. This meant that scenes could change quickly whenever the story switched to Martha's house. All that was needed was to hoist the backdrop up and the scene was changed. The audience actually clapped the first time this happened.

8 Following its success at the *Playtime!* festival, *The Apple Worm* will be touring around the state. The tour starts with eight performances back at the Reddington Entertainment Centre. After this, it heads onto the road for the next three months. This is a fantastic show and all members of the family will find something to love about it. More importantly, it is a great opportunity to support local talent. Who knows — Grace, Michael and Danica may all become famous in the future!



Questions

- How many years has the *Playtime!* festival been on for?
 - four
 - one
 - fifteen
- What time period did Grace set *The Apple Worm* in?
 - the 1930s
 - present day
 - no particular time
- What is the main theme of *The Apple Worm*?
 - the power of the imagination
 - hope
 - money
- Who performed in front of an audience for the first time in this play?
 - Danica Vella
 - Michael Jantz
 - Grace Hynes
- What caused the audience to clap when it first happened?
 - The backdrop moved up.
 - The blue worm puppet moved.
 - Michael said something funny.
- What is meant by 'local talent'?
 - the *Playtime!* festival
 - members of the Upstarts Youth Theatre Company
 - people who act in plays

Vocabulary

Find words in the text that match the meanings below. The word is in the section shown in brackets.

- A person who writes plays (1)
- Says sorry (3)
- Important or considerable (5)
- Someone's interpretation of a character (6)
- To lift (7)

Grammar

A **preposition** is a word situated before a noun to show when or where something happened.

E.g. **on** the mat, **in** the bin, **over** the fence, **before** the party, **under** the tree.

Find a **preposition** in these sentences below from the text.

- The Apple Worm wowed audiences on Sunday night.
- All the characters in the play found this to be important.
- Martha is found to have lied about her age.
- Things are not going well at the factory.

Back To The Text...

- Martha wrote a very clever play.
 - true
 - false
- The *Apple Worm* provided opportunities for local talent.
 - true
 - false

- The playwright was a teenager.
 - true
 - false

Sequencing

Look back through the text to find what happens first. Choose **a** or **b**.

- Martha finds a worm in an apple.
 - Martha lies about her age.
- Martha is caught lying.
 - Martha returns to work.

Think About This

- Who do we see in both illustrations?
 - Grace
 - Michael
 - Danica
- Grace Hynes wrote a
 - stage play.
 - screenplay.
 - short novel.
- What caused some confusion in the play?
 - The role of Martha.
 - The role of Martha's brother.
 - The role of the blue worm.

Challenge Option

Vocabulary: How many words can you make from the word PLAYWRIGHT?