

The Ghost in Gadsden's Garden is a delightful environmental fable

Actors Gymnasium combines circus arts and a poignant story of aging in their annual winter show.

By Kerry Reid @kerryreid

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The Ghost in Gadsden's Garden

AUSTIN D. OIE

Actors Gymnasium primarily functions as a training school in the circus arts, but they put on a full-length show for an extended run every winter. And in the case of *The Ghost in Gadsden's Garden*, you'd be a fool to miss it. A reclusive gardener, Gadsden (Adrian Danzig) spends his days tending the beautiful flowers on the grounds of an old (and allegedly haunted) mansion. And indeed, his interactions with the lovely ghost Vivian (Hayley Larson) provide the only semi-human contact he enjoys. But when Kid (Grace Sherman) creeps past the gate on a dare from classmates, they discover that Vivian may not be what Gadsden thinks.

With echoes of Oscar Wilde's fable "The Selfish Giant" mixed with ecology lessons (Lucy Carapetyan plays Kid's supportive science teacher), writers Chris Mathews (who also directs) and Sully Ratke incorporate the natural and supernatural with seamless aplomb.

Larson's aerial work on the silks is particularly breathtaking, and Carapetyan joins with acrobatics creating clever physical metaphors for various scientific relationships, from symbiotic to parasitic. (Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi created the circus interludes, with Kasey Foster choreographing dances to Kevin O'Donnell's original sound and music.) The teen ensemble plays various impish garden flora and Kid's Scooby Gang of tormentors-turned-allies with assured wit and charm. Danzig, cofounder of the beloved 500 Clown troupe, brings poignant charm to his lonely aging Gadsden. The entire show is a treat for the eyes and heart from beginning to end. 🎪

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