

## Review: Little Women, the Musical

A beautiful and uniquely memorable performance of this cracking classic graces York campus. [Lucie Parker](#) reviews

Saturday 15 June 2013

**Directors:** Lily Cooper and Simone Ibbett-Brown.

**Musical Directors:** Will Descrettes and Simone Ibbett-Brown.

**Producer:** Zoe Biles

**Rating:** ★★★★★



The girls of Little Women; Credit, and below: Jack Western

This week sees the Barn held captive by the stunning combination of the endearing words of *Little Women's* author Louisa May Alcott, and the beautiful music of Jason Howland, pulling the audience further and further in with every word and note. We bear witness to the lives of the four March sisters: Jo (Lottie Johnson), Amy (Betty Jones), Meg (Alice Wright), and Beth (Zoe Spencer). Through the beauty of song and dance their growth and love for each other and their beloved Marmee (Claire Curtis-Ward) is portrayed, the patriarchal gap left by their father filled with the passion and zest for life that these women hold delicately together.

This feminine world of hopes and dreams is set on the foundation of a charmingly untidy attic room, filled with the paraphernalia of childhood memories and home comforts. This is the perfect setting for this musical, with strategic lighting and prop movement used to create smooth set changes without the need for a complete upheaval. The presence of music throughout sails around the set, adding power where needed and highlighting the ever-changing atmosphere of emotions. Dramatic scenes are further

exaggerated, with the deep bass and prevailing melody carrying the passion and rage of Jo's stories in a way that spoken word alone cannot.



Jo, played by Lottie Johnson

The chemistry between the sisters was effortlessly wonderful. As the definite star of the show, Johnson's omnipresent energy and talent reverberates around the set, twirling around the other actors and "making the clouds go away" for everyone she engages with. The power behind her voice leaves the barn reeling. Jones, Wright, and Spencer capture the distinct personalities of their characters flawlessly, the strength in their voices complementing Johnson in the way particular to sisters growing up together: each falling into their individual yet united roles. The other actors completed this solid cast, with every voice being distinctive, full of personality, and wonderfully in tune. The strength of each character combined makes the scenes where everyone is on truly magical. A string of comedy that filters in and out throughout truly gives this play tangible sparks, drawing the audience in to feel like we are together laughing alongside the sisters.

The technique of using some of the characters to act out the people in Jo's stories is the best thing in this performance. Watching Johnson dramatically mimicking and acting out what she is also reading and singing, in a synchronised manner to the character acting it out in front of her allows us to expand our imaginations by viewing hers so clearly. These scenes create the perfect amalgamation of childlike humour and creativity, acting as allegories that bridge the gap between the real world and Jo's head.

With this performance comes everything the Barn needs: a classic that everyone can relate to, humour that creates a connection between us and the actors, and the morals that come with a story filled with the hopes we hold as we are carried around the circle of life.



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