

FINALLY, IT'S STARTING TO FEEL A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS

[THE SANTA CLAUS SHOW 2014](#)

by Tim Bray

songs by Christine White

incidental music by Kristie Addison

directed by Tim Bray

by arrangement with Playmarket

at [The Pumphouse, Takapuna](#), Auckland

Until 20 Dec 2014

Reviewed by Joanna Page, 13 Dec 2014

After a rather trying week the thought of finishing work in time to get Masters Ten Months and Four to The Pumphouse in time for the Gala Performance of *The Santa Claus Show* had me feeling a tad humbugular. Not so the smalls, and the anticipation of seeing Santa was almost too much.

I'd heard about Tim Bray's magical Christmas show from friends who have made it part of their festive-season tradition and now, having seen it myself, I can see why.

The Santa Claus Show was first performed in 1991. It's the story of Alana and Kelly, young friends named for Tim Bray's nieces, who are very different. Alana has just one wish for Christmas – a selfless one at that – whereas Kelly's wish list would use a ream of paper. When her letter arrives at the North Pole, Elfie, the Chief Elf, chooses to bring her to help Santa with his Christmas Eve task.

This year's performance is as slick in its simplicity as you could want from a Tim Bray Production. John Parker's design, Michael Craven's lighting design and Chantelle Gerrard's costumes are spot on – particularly for the toy scene. Master Four is enthralled from the get-go. He is impressed that the whole show is signed (by another Kelly: Kelly Hodgins) although he feels bad that some people are not able to hear Kristie Addison's music.

Part of this show's appeal is in the way it incorporates a raft of theatrical effects and genres. There's shadow puppetry, flying beds, a panto-style game of hide-and-seek, and spectacular shrinking of some cast members when they land on rooftops.

The other reason for its success is the cast. This is their third performance of the day, and they are fresh, energetic and utterly believable. The dynamic between Pippiajna Tui Jane's Kelly and Laura Sanderson's Alana is utterly credible (and provides a flashback to my childhood); Adam Burrell's Elfie provides slapstick, great singing and an element of mischief; the little elves Twitty (Ava Baynham) and Twiddly (Jacob Hussey) have cute factor and temper Elfie's rambunctiousness; the supporting cast members switch from character to character seamlessly.

But the star of the show is Santa (as himself). The audience is overwhelmed with awe from the moment we first hear him – think wide eyes and instant shyness. He's lucky to have Tim Raby as his stunt double for the 10th year since the show first began. Santa is magical, jolly, and very patient with his Christmas-Eve guest's expectations. The moment he leaves presents under the tree at Kelly's

house I know I'll bring my boys back every year from now on.

Finally, it's starting to feel a lot like Christmas.

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