

Herald Sun



📷 The cast of hit show *Spot (the dog)* on now at the Arts Centre.

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Spot bounces onto the theatre stage

Andrew Fuhrmann, Herald Sun

November 14, 2019 5:02pm

Spot

[three and half stars]

Details: Arts Centre Melbourne, until 17 Nov.

Reviewer: Andrew Fuhrmann

Eric Hill's iconic *Spot* books have all the ingredients necessary for a kiddie-pleasing preschoolers' theatre show.

The colours are bright. The stories are simple but engaging. And Spot – surely the world's most famous puppy – is irresistibly cuddly.

This show brings to life the classic *Spot Goes to the Farm*, first published in 1987. Spot and his blue hippopotamus friend visit a farm to meet the animals and help with chores.

It's produced by the same company that recently toured live versions of Julia Donaldson's *Gruffalo* books and Andy Griffiths and Terry Denton's *Treehouse* franchise.

And they've done well to create puppets that are as eye-catching and adorable as Hill's illustrations while also seeming wonderfully alive.

Eric Hill pioneered lift-the-flap books and this show cleverly adapts the same idea. There are colourful surprises lurking under every surface of James Browne's compact set.

The three cast members are adept puppeteers and also vibrant personalities. Spot has plenty of song and dance and pantomime high jinks.

Kailah Cabanas is wonderfully expressive as Helen the hippo. Enya Daly is bubbly and enthusiastic as Spot. And Chris Vernon, as Spot's dad and various other animals, is charmingly daggy.

Director Liesel Badorreka makes good use of the whole space and the production fits comfortably on the large Playhouse stage.

Spot has a relaxed performance style with an even tempo throughout. It's a sunny bit of kids' theatre with all the charm and innocence and simplicity of the book.