

British Theatre Guide

News, reviews, features and podcast on theatre across the UK

Edward Scissorhands

Devised, directed and choreographed by Matthew Bourne
The Lowry, Salford
(2006)

Edward Scissorhands is a modern fairy tale written for the 1990 film directed by Tim Burton. It mixes elements of *Frankenstein* and *Beauty and the Beast*, with a few bits of *Shockheaded Peter* thrown in for good measure.

Edward is pieced together with a normal body but with hands made from pairs of scissors and brought to life by The Inventor, who lives in a crumbling old house on a hill. However The Inventor dies after being attacked by local ruffians who break in wearing Halloween costumes and Edward is left on his own. He wanders into the town for the first time, which is a middle-class, middle-American town that appears to be straight out of the 1950s, where he is feared, then taken in, then treated as a curiosity, then cast out. He also falls in love with Kim, the daughter of the family that takes him in.

This dance version of the story from Matthew Bourne's latest company New Adventures is not just a stage interpretation of the story but of the whole film. Les Brotherston's design is modelled on that of the film, with the gothic silhouettes and shadows of The Inventor's house contrasting sharply with the bright colours of the houses in the town. The score is by Terry Davies, but Danny Elfman's music from the film (which works perfectly as dance music) drifts in and out. Even Richard Winsor's movements as Edward draw a lot from the awkward, jerky strut that Johnny Depp used in the film. All of these work perfectly on stage and contribute towards putting across the story.

The stage adaptation is by the original screenplay writer Caroline Thompson. Although every screenwriting book and course goes on and on about film being mainly a visual medium, to tell the same story without any words at all is another matter entirely, but here it largely works with only a few parts where the story is a little hazy or has been simplified to work just using movement. The characterisations are superb, from the lead characters to smaller chorus parts, and Winsor manages to make Edward (played on some nights by Sam Archer) a very poignant and sympathetic character.

The overall direction and choreography demonstrates a number of areas that Bourne has recently worked in. The story is told purely through movement like a ballet, but the style of dance is nearer to the Broadway musical than to Covent Garden. The result is a true family show with high production values that is compelling to watch and very entertaining. Tim Burton is a master of the modern dark fairy tale without the safety and the sickly sweetness of Disney, and this production realises his vision on stage almost as well as he did himself for the big screen.

Edward Scissorhands runs until 25 February 2006

[Philip Fisher](#) reviewed the premiere at Sadler's Wells, [Rachel Lynn Brody](#) reviewed the first stop on the tour, Edinburgh and [Peter Lathan](#) saw it towards the end of the tour in Newcastle.

Reviewer: [David Chadderton](#)