

British Theatre Guide

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Fiddler on the Roof

Joseph Stein (book), Jerry Bock (music) and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics)

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre

Leeds Grand Theatre

29 July–2 August 2025

Since its Broadway debut in 1964, *Fiddler on the Roof* has proven time and again that its themes and characters strike a powerful chord with audiences. Despite tackling heavy subject matter—the struggles of a Jewish community facing oppression in a Russian shtetl at the turn of the 20th century—this much-loved musical defied early expectations and became a phenomenal hit.

The central character of the show—the milkman Tevye—was first brought to life by Zero Mostel. However, it was Topol who became most closely associated with the role, performing it over 3,000 times on stage across his career and earning an Oscar nomination for his performance in the 1971 film adaptation. His legendary portrayal set a benchmark, making him the standard by which all future Tevyes are judged.

Fortunately, Matthew Woodyatt takes up the mantle with confidence, offering a sincere and engaging interpretation of the dairyman-philosopher. As the central figure and narrator, Tevye introduces us to life in Anatevka—a place he navigates with humour, faith and frustration. Balancing the demands of five daughters and a spirited wife, he wrestles with tradition and change, often holding private debates with God and tossing out wonderfully dry one-liners rooted in classic Jewish humour.

Woodyatt's vocal performance is particularly strong. His renditions of numbers like "Tradition", the timeless "If I Were A Rich Man" and the tender "Do You Love Me?" (with Jodie Jacobs as Golde) are all delivered with assurance and emotion. A standout moment arrives during the poignant "Chava" scene, when Tevye reflects on his daughter's departure. Instead of the traditional ballet, this production opts for an evocative clarinet duet between Chava (Hannah Bristow) and the ever-present Fiddler (Raphael Papo)—a fresh and moving reinterpretation.

The ensemble delivers the show's key scenes with energy and precision. From the rousing opening number to the delicate "Sabbath Prayer", the raucous tavern celebration "To Life" (featuring a standout Michael S Siegel as Lazar Wolf) and the fever-dream sequence "Tevye's Dream", the company handles each moment with clarity and flair. The Wedding scene, complete with the Bottle Dance—an infamously difficult piece of choreography—lands as one of the night's most exhilarating highlights, executed with impressive balance and poise.

Dan Wolff is an endearing Motel, and his solo "Miracle of Miracles" hits all the right notes. The daughters—portrayed by Natasha Jules Bernard, Hannah Bristow, and Ashleigh Schuman—shine vocally, especially in the charming "Matchmaker". Jodie Jacobs gives Golde warmth and sharpness, capturing the complexity of a woman who has devoted her life to building a secure home. Beverley Klein steals several scenes as the meddling but lovable matchmaker Yente, delivering her lines with perfect comedic timing.

Tom Scutt's set design is imaginative and functional, built around a split-level concept. The upper platform cleverly doubles as the titular rooftop for the fiddler and transforms depending on the scene's needs, while the lower area serves as a flexible stage for the ensemble's dynamic movement. The orchestra's placement at the rear, largely hidden from view, works seamlessly.

Ultimately, *Fiddler on the Roof* remains an irresistible piece of theatre—anchored in its historical context but echoing with contemporary relevance. The musical's portrayal of displacement, identity and the longing for safety feels especially resonant given current global conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. Balancing humour, heart and a haunting sense of loss, this production reminds us why *Fiddler* endures: it entertains whilst also making us reflect.

Reviewer: [James Ballands](#)