

## FINANCIAL TIMES

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### Bank On It, Rose Lipman Building, London review

By Sarah Hemming

Theatre-Rites' clever little show introduces children to the basics of economics



Theatre-Rites' 'Bank On It'

Judging by the financial woes all around us, it is never too early to get to grips with economics – so into the fray step Theatre-Rites with a show aimed at children as young as five. It won't quite prime any pint-sized person to be the next governor of the Bank of England – at least not immediately – but it is a witty, charming and thoughtful little piece of theatre.

It starts with the all-too-adult scenario of frustration at the ATM. We gather in the foyer of the Rose Lipman Building, designed to look like the outside of a bank, where a man approaches to use the "hole in the wall". The machine bleeps and blinks and refuses to issue any cash. So far, so normal. But then it produces a note telling us to "Go Away". The bank doors too are firmly locked. Our man, and assorted other customers, begin to panic. How are they to get hold of their money? Then they spot the bank manager, creeping furtively through a side-door. Customers and audience chase after him, forming an instant angry crowd.



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Theatre-Rites specialise in creating innovative work for children, and this show (part of the Beyond Barbican season) is a judicious mix of dramatised scenarios, promenade and installation. Inside the bank we meet a petulant talking filing cabinet (confirming, as we have always suspected, that such objects have a mind of their own) and a creepy animated adding machine, both of which help to spell out the message that there is no money left. After a quick lesson about economic prudence – that if the money going in is less than the money going out there may be trouble ahead – the piece broadens out to apply the same logic to the earth's resources.

Attempts to crack the code of the bank safe finally result in us gaining admission. But rather than gold ingots, what we find inside are cleverly thought-out, interactive installations on environmental issues. Directed by Sue Buckmaster and engagingly performed by the cast, this is an astute, often beautiful show. The finale, which deploys the simple pleasure of throwing pennies into a wishing pool to get everyone to consider what they really value most, is unexpectedly lovely. Children may not emerge completely au fait with fiscal policy, but as they grow up they may think twice before maxing out their credit cards or upgrading their mobile phones.



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