

ENTERTAINMENT &amp; ARTS

## Review: ‘Harry Potter and the Cursed Child’ brings authentic magic to the Hollywood Pantages



Emmet Smith, left, as Albus Potter and Aidan Close as Scorpius Malfoy in the North American touring production of “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.” (Matthew Murphy)

**By Charles McNulty**

Theater Critic

Feb. 21, 2025 3 AM PT

Harry Potter has at long last arrived in Los Angeles, and he’s brought his wife and son along for the ride.

A family man with a high-level ministerial job, he largely cedes the stage to the younger generation in “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child,” the award-winning stage play by Jack Thorne based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, Thorne and John Tiffany, the show’s brilliant director.

This sequel takes place 19 years after Harry and the old gang rescued the world of wizardry in “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.” In the epilogue of that novel, Rowling provides a glimpse of Albus Potter, Harry’s son, who when “Cursed Child” begins is at the station ready to embark on his own Hogwarts adventure.

Burdened by his famous father, Albus (an endearing, fawnlike Emmet Smith) is in the throes of pouty adolescence. Anxious, insecure and resentful, he worries that he will be compared to his dad and found lacking. Harry ( John Skelley, sympathetically earnest) doesn’t always carefully measure his paternal words, as his wife, Ginny (Trish Lindstrom), takes pains to point out. But he means well, even as he digs himself in deeper with his son.



“Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” North American Tour (Matthew Murphy)

Albus immediately bonds with Scorpius (Aidan Close), a social outcast who’s jittery to a flamboyant degree. Scorpius is the son of Draco Malfoy (Benjamin Thys), Harry’s bitter old rival. But his real father is rumored to be the evil and presumably dead Voldemort — a piece of malicious gossip that only damages the kid’s reputation more. (While playing to the hilt Scorpius’ misfit nature, Close simultaneously endows the character with the electric eccentricity of an indie band frontman.)

Rose (Naiya Vanessa McCalla), daughter of Harry’s pals Hermione (Ebony Blake) and Ron (Matt Mueller), is weirded out by Scorpius. But Albus finds a soulmate in the awkward lad. To prove themselves, the two boys venture back in time (courtesy of a forbidden Time-Turner) to correct a mistake from Harry’s past that remains a blot on his legacy.

“Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” had its premiere in 2016 in [London](#), where I first saw what was then a two-part play. The production’s huge success was replicated on Broadway, where the show won the Tony for best play, along with additional awards for direction and various categories of design.



The cast of “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.” (Matthew Murphy)

But “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” underwent a [transformation](#) during the pandemic, becoming a leaner and less costly version of itself. The two parts were consolidated into a single play, now running just under three hours.

In my London review, I had questioned whether the grand scope was necessary. Yes the marathon show was an event, but did it really need so many hours? I wasn’t convinced, even though I easily fell under the work’s spell, no matter that I was a relative newcomer to the world of “Harry Potter.”

At the Hollywood Pantages, the company often seems to be breathlessly sprinting across the stage, not wanting to lose a second of precious storytelling time. The production, which features the mesmerizing movement direction of Steven Hoggett, retains its remarkable fluidity despite the increased panting.



John Skelley as Harry Potter, left, and Emmet Smith as Albus Potter in the North American touring production of “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child.” (Matthew Murphy)

The design team creates magic in darkened spaces. Neil Austin’s lighting, Gareth Fry’s sound, Imogen Heap’s musical compositions and Jamie Harrison’s illusions and magic harmonize to perfection on a set by Christine Jones that’s built for rapid transit.

The story of “Cursed Child” is complicated, especially for someone unfamiliar with the intricacies of Harry Potter’s backstory. This truncated version makes the plot somewhat more confusing, but there’s no need to sweat the plot’s fine points. The thematic

architecture is lucidly in place in this tale of sons stepping out of the shadows of their fathers to test their mettle in the most perilous of circumstances.

The play ponders the contingent nature of history. In trying to fix an error in the past, Albus and Scorpius endanger the world that made their lives possible in the first place. The malevolent forces they unwittingly unleash have an agenda of their own.

One of the lessons Albus and Scorpius learn along the way is the difficulty in distinguishing by appearance good from evil. Delphi (Julia Nightingale) feigns sweetness and light as she encourages the boys' dangerous mission, but her identity is not what it seems.



A scene from the play "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child." (Matthew Murphy)

The longer version of "Cursed Child" had more time to delve into Scorpius' fears about his own identity, including the question of whether goodness and badness might be

inherited traits. But the new version brings Albus and Scorpius into a deeper intimacy. The play becomes a kind of love story, but it retains enough youthful innocence to not be threatened by any new executive order from the Trump administration.

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ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

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July 8, 2022

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The acting company comfortably inhabits the fantasy world of “Cursed Child,” where wands glow with secret potential and framed portraits can suddenly start talking. There are moments when the performers overplay the humor, suspense and moral outrage. One doesn’t expect Chekhovian subtlety, but a little more trust in the perceptive powers of the audience wouldn’t be amiss.

Yet the production is so entrancing that the occasional lack of modulation by the performers hardly matters. Tiffany and his collaborators create authentic stage magic of a timeless variety. (“Cursed Child” isn’t at all old-fashioned, but much of it would be right at home on the 19th century London stage.)



Matt Mueller as Ron Weasley, left, and Ebony Blake as Hermione Granger in "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child." (Matthew Murphy)



The feats of flying are thrilling enough, but the show's best special effects have a beautiful simplicity. Astounding transformations, in which one character takes on the appearance of another, will leave you wondering how the trickery was pulled off. Technology is secondary to artistic ingenuity.

A pile of luggage, the vaulted ceiling of a Victorian train station, a sliding staircase and a frolicsome bookcase conjure the various settings with minimal fuss. The tableaux are as efficient as they are bewitching. The dialogue can get clunky and overexplicit, but the story springs to life in theatrical imagery that materializes and dissolves with dreamlike ease.

“Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” has arrived in L.A. at a moment when we could all use a little escapism. After seeing the show again, I'd like to formally apply for citizenship in the “Harry Potter” universe. Who wouldn't want to live in a world where power hasn't supplanted justice, and mistakes, rather than defining you, provide an opportunity to learn and grow?

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### ‘Harry Potter and the Cursed Child’

**Where:** Hollywood Pantages Theatre, 6233  
Hollywood Blvd., L.A.

**When:** 7:30 Tuesdays-Thursdays, 8 p.m.  
Fridays, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturdays, 1 and 7 p.m.  
Sundays. Ends June 22

**Tickets:** Currently start at \$57 (subject to  
change)

**Contact:** [BroadwayInHollywood.com](http://BroadwayInHollywood.com) or  
[Ticketmaster.com](http://Ticketmaster.com)

**Running time:** 2 hours and 55 minutes  
(including one intermission)

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**Charles McNulty**

Charles McNulty is the theater critic of the Los Angeles Times. He received his doctorate in dramaturgy and dramatic criticism from the Yale School of Drama.