

Going Out What's On Around Town

# Forlorn hopes take flight in gritty drama

## Theatre Kes

It's over 40 years since Barry Hines penned the acclaimed novel *A Kestrel For A Knave*, and yet the story still remains as poignant and striking today as it was then.

A year after it was published, a film dramatisation directed by Ken Loach was released, which won several awards and accolades for its depictions of 1960s Yorkshire. Now released in theatrical form, the Catherine Wheels children's theatre company's adaptation has a lot to live up to. Staying true to the tone, the play, adapted by Rob Evans, arrives at the Brunton Theatre for four performances before continuing on its extensive tour of Scotland.

For those of you not familiar with the storyline of the book, *A Kestrel For A Knave* tells the tale of a 15-year-old boy named Billy Casper, growing up in the South Yorkshire town of Barnsley in the 1960s. Life for Billy is bleak. He comes from a broken home that consists of an absent father, an indifferent mother and a bully of an older half-brother. Money is tight and the family are often cold and hungry. School is not much better, with dispiriting teachers and fickle children making Billy's day-to-day existence a living hell. He has no goals or aspirations, but is careering towards a life of working down the pit which he desperately wants to avoid.

Change enters Billy's life in the form of a bird, a kestrel that he finds and takes home as a pet, and which he names Kes. Billy nurtures and trains the fledgling, which quickly becomes an integral part of his life. Kes comes to be his friend – his only friend – and his confidante. Billy suddenly has a purpose to his life, and a reason to live. Kes is the story



**Soaring talents:** Sean Murray and James Anthony Pearson

Picture: ©Paul Watt

of how one boy's heart came to beat, and how it eventually ended up breaking.

If the success of previous projects are anything to go by, Kes should be in good hands. Formed in 1999, the Catherine Wheels Theatre Company is one of the country's leading producers of theatre for young people and children.

The production has been created by the same team responsible for the contemporary tale *Pobby And Dingan*, with James Anthony Pearson playing the role of Billy and Sean Murray impressively playing no fewer than

13 other characters. Designer Karen Tennent has worked hard to create a set that not only represents a multitude of the locations depicted within the Yorkshire setting of the novel, but which also incorporates film projection created by Jonathan Charles.

So in words reminiscent of true Yorkshire style, get thissen down t' theatre, whilst tha can. Tha wain't regret it. *Lyndsey Cartwright*

*Today and Saturday, Brunton Theatre, Edinburgh. Today 10.30am and 7.30pm, Saturday 2.30pm and 7.30pm, £6.*  
Tel: 0131 665 2240. [www.bruntontheatre.co.uk](http://www.bruntontheatre.co.uk)