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THEATER

BY SARA BRICKNER



Trolls and Witches and Bears, Oh My!

Nisse's Dream puts a new face on traditional folklore.

Nisse's *Dream*, an original children's musical theater production by Eugeneans Paul Safar and Nancy Wood, is that rare breed of kids' entertainment: It's fun. It's wholesome. It has a positive message. And the kids you know will love it anyway, without even realizing that they're learning something in the process.

The play tells the story of Nisse, a young boy who must venture out into the woods to save his family's farm after mean, thieving forest trolls make off with their livelihood, a few chickens and their much-loved family cow, Lily White. On his journey, Nisse encounters several helpful companions, most with four legs, to help him find the trolls and safely bring Lily White home.

The coming of age story is loosely based on a Swedish folk tale, and is performed by a talented cast of children masquerading as trolls, water sprites, cows, dogs and a host of other colorful characters. It's the kind of universally appealing storyline that promises to entertain even the old fogies in the audience.

"It's just whimsical and fun," director Maggie Tryk said. "It could be [performed] and loved all over the world."

Nisse's Dream started out as a bedtime story Paul Safar, a father of two, invented. After seeing his son's enthusiastic reaction to the tale, Safar, who had wanted to create an original children's theater production, searched to no avail for a collaborator until it

occurred to him that Nancy Wood (a parent of two herself) might be interested. She agreed, and just a few weeks later, *Nisse's Dream* became a reality.

But as Wood, Safar and Tryk know all too well, getting the funding and space to stage an original production can be a difficult undertaking.

"We were facing a very uphill battle, trying to market a piece nobody had ever heard of," Wood said.

Nisse's Dream
August 12 at 7 pm
August 19 at 11 am and 7 pm
August 13, 14, 20 and 21 at 1 pm
Lord Leebrick Theatre
\$5 children/\$7.50 adults

So Safar and Wood decided to make a CD with recordings of the music and story. After about three years of distributing the disc and performing the story around town, *Nisse's Dream* quickly gained what both Wood and Tryk describe as a "cult following" of kids. The duo created Cherry Blossom Productions in order to scrape up funding for the show that would include provisions for fanciful costumes and scenery that would do *Nisse's Dream* justice — not to mention six professional musicians.

"We insisted on live music," Wood said. "We managed to put live music with live theater. We even have a little three-minute modern dance piece."

With the help of lighting designer Corey Ennis, costume designer Alysse Hennessey, set designer Steen Mitchell and propmaster Michelle Perrino, *Nisse's* world will come alive onstage at the Lord Leebrick Theater starting this week. **EW**

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