

PETER PAN (JR.) FLIES AGAIN

Rose Children's Theatre takes us back to Never Never Land, Disney style

Who can resist a story that starts with a trio of children flying out the bedroom window to a land where you never grow up? Add a fearsome, hook-handed sea captain and a mischievous fairy, and you are solidly in the grasp of the marvelous adventure of *Peter Pan*, a version of which — Disney's *Peter Pan Jr.* — opens Friday, Nov. 7, at Churchill High School under the auspices of Rose Children's Theatre.

"Peter Pan's endearing message of eternal youth and believing in yourself is always a good one for the heart," says the play's director, Tama Rowan. The longtime Eugene musician and director should know a thing or two about eternal youth, as she's been directing children's theater for 13 years.

When asked about the benefits of working with kids, Rowan responds enthusiastically. "All benefits in my book," she says. "I adore working with children and youth; it keeps me young. They are such an inspiration." She does confess, however, that effectively and fairly blocking 63 adolescent actors on a single stage can be challenging.

The kids in the Rose Theatre production are equally enthusiastic. Wee fairy/sea creature Ellen Poulsen, 7, says that she likes "doing something I've never gotten to do before. And I love meeting new friends!" Her older sibling, Evan (crocodile/lost child), also chimes in.



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PETER PAN JR.

"What's great is to be able to have a really fun experience," Evan says, and "to be on a stage and perform in front of other people."

According to Rowan, Rose Children's Theatre chose to go with the newer, Disney Junior version of *Peter Pan* because "even though condensed, this version does hold true to J. M. Barrie's story and the 1953 Disney film."

And there are a number of tweaks to the old story that Rowan admires. "I love how Disney composers Eric Svejcar and David Zellnik chose to feature Tinker Bell and her fairy court to open this musical. I also appreciate how they showed sensitivity to the Native American portion of

the story and changed lyrics in the featured song to focus on bravery, friendship [and] honor."

This production, Rowan points out, is dedicated to the memory of a beloved Eugene actor. "Ten years ago, Rose Children's Theatre presented the full version of *Peter Pan* at the McDonald Theatre," she says. "The villainous Captain Hook was played by one of Eugene's best, John Muellner. Sadly, we lost John at the beginning of this year. His family is loaning us the beautiful hook and saber he used in the 2004 production." ■

Peter Pan Jr. runs Nov. 7-16 at Churchill High School Theater, 1850 Bailey Hill Rd.; \$8-\$10, therct.com.



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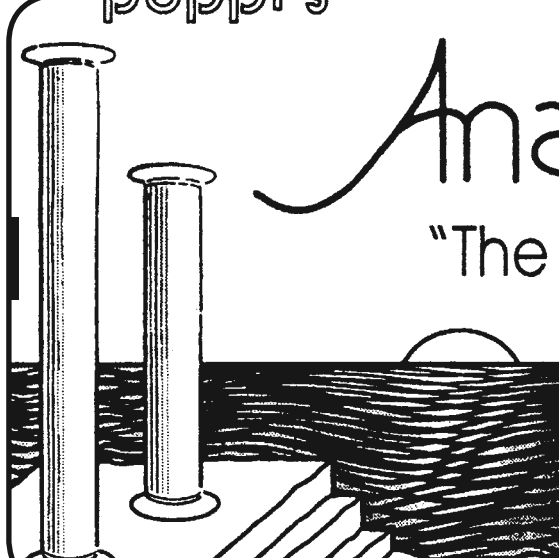
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