

THE ARTS

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Making it **MAGICAL NANNY MARY POPPINS TAKES THE STAGE IN CHINOOK** 'Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious'

By **PATRICK WEBB**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Members of the Peninsula Association of Performing Artists in Chinook, Wash., can guarantee that their annual musical will be Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.

"Mary Poppins" opens Friday, June 28, and runs for five weekends through July 28. It is being staged at Washington's Fort Columbia theater at the north end of the Chinook Tunnel.

The show is based, in part, on the Academy Award-winning 1964 movie which launched Julie Andrews' film career after her stage success in "My Fair Lady."

The author of the eight Mary Poppins books, Australian P.T. Travers, set her stories in London in the 1930s.

But Walt Disney and the Sherman Brothers, Richard and Robert, who wrote the memorable music, switched the action to 1911, the end of the Edwardian era, and incorporated animated scenes, much to Travers' distaste.

The play reflects that decision, but is different from the movie in many respects, with songs added.

But the gems that had children and adults humming in the 1960s, like "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," "A Spoonful of Sugar," "Jolly Holiday" and the Oscar-winning "Chim Chim Cher-ee," are all included.

The production is directed by Alicia Trusty, who grew up on the Long Beach Peninsula then moved to Los Angeles, the first two years studying at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts then a couple of years pursuing acting.

She moved back in summer 2018 and assisted director Brooke Flood in staging the straight play, "Enchanted April," last fall.

Trusty was upbeat about her first show in charge.

"It's a lot of learning for me for sure, and working to inspire and encourage," she said. "We have our core group, but are adding in some fresh faces and a lot of young people."

Double cast characters

Several actors share parts.

Reed Sexton appears as Bert the chim-



Patrick Webb

ABOVE: The Banks household includes, left to right, Seth Grote as servant Robertson, Jonathan Cole, as George Banks, Cindy Flood as his wife, Winifred, plus housekeeper-cook Emma Zimmerman. **BELOW:** 'It's fantastic when they trust themselves to go for it.' — Director Alicia Trusty describing first-time actors.

ney sweep/narrator and his wife Kaylee Sexton plays Mary Poppins, double cast with Lindsay McGrath.

"It gives multiple opportunities," said Trusty. "It's a big part and it can be hard on the voice. So this can be a way to preserve their energies."

For Kaylee Sexton and McGrath, it has helped in developing their character.

"We are able to watch the other person and share information," Sexton said. "We are not competitive."

McGrath said portraying Mary Poppins is a challenge.

"She is very vain and full of herself," she said. "It is very hard to act that way!"

The Banks children — who start out naughty and turn out nice — are also double cast.

They are played by Westin Billeci and Aarin Hoygaard and sisters Evelyn Normand and Violet Normand.



Magical nanny unites family

The story is about a work-focused banker who cannot find time to show his love for his children. His youngsters drive away a series of nannies until Mary Poppins magically arrives to unite the family.

Jonathan Cole, who had the title role in PAPA's "Beauty and the Beast" last year, returns as George Banks and PAPA founder Cindy Flood is his wife, Winifred. Their servants are played by Emma Zimmerman and Seth Grote.

Sadly, Timothy Pior, the talented teenage actor who had the choice supporting role as Lumiere in "Beast," died of complications resulting from influenza earlier this year. He had intended to audition following his success as Tevye, the lead in the Warrenton High School production of "Fiddler on the Roof."

In a tribute to his memory, four family members, his mother, Candy, and chil-

IF YOU GO

"Mary Poppins" A musical by the Peninsula Association of Performing Artists

When: Friday, June 28, through July 28. Performances are 7 p.m. Friday and Saturdays; 2 p.m. Sundays.

Where: Fort Columbia State Park (entrance by the Chinook Tunnel). No Discover Pass is needed for admission to the park.

Details: Tickets are \$18-\$23 adults, \$7.50-\$12.50 children 12 and under. They can be purchased in advance from Okie's Thriftway in Ocean Park, Wash., online at papatheater.com, by calling (360) 836-4448 or at the door.

dren Elizabeth, Victoria and Alexandria, play roles in this production, several making their debuts.

Elizabeth appears as one of the nannies that the Banks children terrorize before Mary Poppins arrives.

Peninsula singing stalwart Jane Schussman plays the bird woman, whose "Feed the Birds" is among the most poignant of the songs.

Matthew Warner, the villain in "Beast," appears as neighbor Admiral Boom.

Completing the cast are Genice Normand, Charlotte Frank, Jabin Jones, Stephanie Fritts, John Weldon, Gabrielle Brinkman, Pepper Weldon, Olivia Townsend and Christina Suksdorf.

A rising cast

Trusty's cast is blossoming as opening night approaches.

"For a lot of people, it's their first time on stage and they don't know how to trust themselves," she said. "It's been awesome to watch the process and see them click. It's fantastic when they trust themselves to go for it."

The show should appeal to all audiences, Trusty said.

"It's about families, and how they gel together and what happens when we stray away from the kid in us." 