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CENTRAL FLORIDA

by Matthew MacDermid

Seaside's *Peter Pan* adds magic to Daytona Beach

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Peter Pan: the ultimate fantasy for a child who doesn't to grow up. Or perhaps it's a fantasy for an adult who still wishes they were a young child, playing games and longing to feel the wind blowing in their hair as they fly through the air. Anyone who has ever played pirates, indians, or even house can find a connection to the classic musical based on J.M. Barrie's play. And in the process of seeing it again, even those who have grown up long ago allow the years to melt away as the Darling family follows the always young Peter to Neverland - a land where a band of lost boys never grow up, and with the help of Tiger Lily and her tribe of indians, even a band of pirates are no true threat. With a score by Moose Charlap and Carolyn Leigh, and additional lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green and additional music by Jule Styne, *Peter Pan* has the requisite charm and magic which has made it an enduring classic since the play premiered in 1904, and since the musical made its first appearance on Broadway in 1954. Since Mary Martin first flew through the Darling's nursery window on stage and then for television, countless energetic actresses have played the title role, including Sandy Duncan and Cathy Rigby in high-profile revivals. With Seaside Music Theater's production, we can add a new Peter to the list of greats who have played it - an as-of-yet unknown young performer named Maria Kerrigan who will quickly erase all memories of Peters past.

Seaside Music Theater's production of *Peter Pan*, directed and choreographed by Earl Weaver, features Kerrigan in a tour-de-force performance so full of impish energy and seemingly reckless abandon that any thoughts that Peter is being played by a woman instantly vanish. Her first lines, building fully through her first musical number ("I've Gotta Crow"), are totally boyish - and everything that follows is pure perfection. Take for instance the awkward fashion in which Peter receives and gives Wendy a kiss (even when it is only receiving a thimble and giving an acorn) or the graceful, yet youthfully athletic way she flies across the stage in numbers like "I'm Flying". Kerrigan is entirely winning from start to finish - whether it's broadly tackling the stereotype of a father teaching his children or reading a newspaper before bed, or the unexpected devastation of possibly losing his fairy friend Tinkerbell - every moment is spot on. She is also outstanding vocally, with numbers like "Neverland" and "I Won't Grow Up" coming across with the polish of a musical theatre performer who understands the necessity to act as well as sound pretty. This is Kerrigan's first time playing Peter Pan, but one expects she'll play it many more times in the years to come.

The supporting cast is also excellent. Mark Chambers is a perfect adversary to Kerrigan's Peter as the comically evil Captain Hook. His "Princely Schemes" and "Waltz" are hilarious and full of tongue-in-cheek nuances that are typical of Chambers' appropriately hammy work. As his sidekick Smee, Hardy Weaver proves to be on equal comic ground, easily holding his own opposite the masterful Chambers. Gracie Winchester's Wendy is the epitome of a girl approaching womanhood, perfectly embodying the young girl's desires to remain young while also beginning to feel the pressures of growing up. Winchester has an outstanding voice, perfectly evident in "Distant Melody" (performed here as a duet between Wendy and Peter), and great command of the stage. Julia Truilo's Mrs. Darling is elegant and loving, and "Tender Shepherd" is in her beautiful care as puts the children to bed for the night. Natalia Londono is an energetic and fiery Tiger Lily, dancing beautifully in a first act Indian ballet and happily going through the motions of a celebration of new friendship in "Ugg-a-Wugg". Both Shannon Bilo and Michael Biggs provide ample support without even showing their faces, with Bilo bringing a simple humanity to Nana and Biggs bringing a comic thrill to the ticking crocodile.

Weaver's direction is solid and his choreography is eye-catching. Terry Tichenor's music direction is outstanding and is fully evident in the full orchestra under his baton. Of the technical aspects, only Adam Rowe's scenery seems to lack the magic and color of a fantasy. Brian O'Keefe's costumes are stunning, and Annmarie Duggan's lighting is outstanding. Both designers seem to truly understand the magic of *Peter Pan* and have worked hard to bring that sensitivity to the audience through their beautifully executed work.

Peter Pan was presented by Seaside Music Theater in the Davidson Theatre at the News-Journal Center and closed on August 19th. For further information regarding Seaside Music Theater's upcoming winter season, visit www.seasidemusictheater.org.

The Cast:

Peter Pan - Maria Kerrigan*
 Mr. Darling/Captain Hook - Mark Chambers*
 Mrs. Darling - Julia Truilo*
 Wendy Darling - Gracie Winchester*
 John Darling - Nick Rishel
 Michael Darling - Dominic Circelli
 Tiger Lily - Natalia Londono*
 Smee - Hardy Weaver*
 Nana - Shannon Bilo*
 Crocodile - Michael Biggs
 Liza - Viveka Chandrasekaran
 Lost Boys - Keenan Karal Babcock, Blake Chmielewski, Chase Ferreira, Jamie Lowe, Michael Truilo, Yaniv Zarif
 Indians - Viveka Chandrasekaran, Ryan Patrick Lingle, Jose Luaces, Chris McCollum
 Pirates - Justin Carr, Timothy Ellis*, J.P. Haynie
 Ensemble - Justin Banta, Shayla Benoit, Lindsey Bliven, Logan Denninghoff,

Matt Shingledecker, Andrew Tebo

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