

PETER PAN

Presented by: Young People's Theatre

Venue: Young People's Theatre, Hamilton (4961 4895)

Season: Daily until Saturday; then Saturdays to June 4

THIS production of J.M. Barrie's story of Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up, will have audience members of all ages feeling youthful while they are watching it.

The Young People's Theatre actors, directors and technical team have brought out the magic of the tale, as Peter encourages Wendy, John and Michael, the three children in the Darling household in early 20th century London, to fly back with him to Neverland where he looks after other Lost Boys, champions Red Indians and fights the dastardly pirates led by Captain Hook.

The show enchants from the opening moments, when the Darling family's large white sheepdog, Nana, walks across a child's bedroom to her kennel wearing a nanny's cap. And it soars when Peter and the children, who have been sprinkled with fairy dust to enable them to fly, cross the night sky and arrive at Neverland as day breaks in a projected scene which fits seamlessly into the live action.

At its heart, *Peter Pan* is a story about belonging. Peter persuades Wendy to be a mother to the Lost Boys because he, like them, never had a family. And the Darling children are willing to go with him because their father is rigidly regimental.

The production has two casts and the roles of Peter and Captain Hook have three actors. In the cast I saw, Scott Eveleigh had an athletic derring-do as he rescued, at different times, Indian princess Tiger Lily and the Lost Boys and Darling children from Captain Hook and his crew, but the longing for someone who would love and care for him was evident in quieter moments. (Luke Jarvis and Drew Abell King are the other Peters.)

Brayden Porter (sharing with Dylan Smith and Callan Purcell) was a colourful Captain Hook in both performance and the bright red-coated costume designed by Jennifer Bell.

Grahame Cooper (David Nye), one of several adult actors, gave a wry comic touch to the self-absorbed Mr Darling in the opening scenes, making it easy to understand why his children should so readily fly the coop.

The other members of the large ensemble do excellent work under the direction of Wendy Leis, Kelsie Clarke and Alex Budden, with Clarke's set designs imaginatively creating settings ranging from the formality of the London house to the make-do nature of the Lost Boys' underground cave home.

Glenda Price's songs fit well into Barrie's text, though fewer of them in the first half would result in a more comfortable length for younger children.

Ken Longworth

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