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## THEATER REVIEW

# 'Peter Pan' still has plenty of pixie dust

By Rob Kendt, Special to The Times

Sometimes it really is hip to be square.

When, after getting kicked around by assorted Lost Boys for having the temerity to correct their grammar, bespectacled little John Darling (Greyson Spann) comes down front and busts a move in the showstopping "Ugg-a-Wugg," McCoy Rigby Entertainment's umpteenth revival of Peter Pan hits the sort of hambone high that distinguishes first-class family entertainment from mere kiddie pabulum.

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This unashamedly old-fashioned confection hits a number of other highs too — many of them rigging-assisted — as the tireless Cathy Rigby demonstrates again how the whole flying-ageless-boy-urchin-played-by-a-middle-aged-woman thing is done. There's just no one else alive who can do all she does here: convincingly portraying a restless orphan tyro, nicely belting the score's pedestrian songs, tumbling, drumming and, above all (literally), soaring like a hands-free trapeze artist across the La Mirada Theatre's ample proscenium.

Director Glenn Casale and company know what they've got here — a deep-dish theme-park ride with Broadway production values — and they clamber aboard with gusto, never mind the safety bar.

John Iacovelli's scenery, lighted as if from within by Tom Ruzika, evokes the multiplane paintings of classic cel animation, while Shigeru Yaji's costumes — for a multiculti band of pirates, a generic Indian tribe, the

ragtag Lost Boys and the freshly pressed Darling tykes — are like a little kid's dress-up fantasy fashion show.

Patti Colombo's athletic choreography, particularly for Tiger Lily (Dana Solimando) and her fringe-and-feather Indian gang, is both playfully light, even goofy, and smashingly solid.

At bottom, of course, this is more than a cartoon. J.M. Barrie's vintage tale has survived generations of adaptations to stand as a primal fable of youthful fears — particularly the aversion to adulthood's rigid sexual roles, tempered by a childlike terror of the unknown. We don't want to become our parents — ick! — but darned if we don't like having them around on a dark and stormy night.

This frothy "Peter Pan" doesn't thrum these chords too heavily — it doesn't need to — but they're there, even in the pathetic deference of the half-wit Smee (Patrick Richwood) to the preening Captain Hook (Howard McGillin). He's a terrible role model if there ever was one, but a child takes what he gets.

The actors get off their share of individual fillips and grace notes, even a bit of winking, especially McGillin's delightfully prissy Hook. But this revival — which producer Tom McCoy joked on opening night is the "first of five farewell tours" — is blessedly tweak-free. This is still a play in which the final showdown begins almost formally,

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with Hook hailing his opponent as a "brave and im-pudent youth," and Pan re- turning the compliment: "You dark and sinister man, have at me!"

Rigby's irresistible performance climaxes with a sort of altar call for the fairy-tale faithful: When Tinkerbell, seen here as a twinkling starburst spot, is down for the count, Peter turns to us and explains our role: The only way Tink will revive is if we show we still believe in fairies.

How? By applauding, naturally.

You just don't see kids' shows like this anymore: a big old storybook warhorse done with a level of uncondescending commitment that makes us all believers.

\*

'Peter Pan'

**Where:** McCoy Rigby Entertainment at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, 14900 La Mirada Blvd., La Mirada.

**When:** 7:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Thursdays; 8 p.m. Fridays; 2:30 and 8 p.m. Saturdays; 2:30 and 7 p.m. Sundays. Ends Oct. 10.

**Cost:** \$32 to \$40

**Information:** (562) 944-9801 or (714) 994-6310

**Running time:** 2 hours, 20 minutes

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