

Witch's entrance proves exciting

By SHROYER KEARNS

The Witch not only stole the baby in the recent Southfield Repertory Theatre (SRT) production of "Rapunzel and the Witch" — she also stole the show.

Accompanied by thunder and lightning, Peggy Thorp's entrance was enough to send at least one startled tickle seated near the stage running for sanctuary.

Ms. Thorp was a success as the Witch, however, in spite of a face which must be described as likeable. She clearly smiles more than she glowers, and after the show when the cast gathered on the apron to greet the little playgoers, Ms. Thorp wouldn't have scared anybody.

But when she stomped on stage and covered with her Magic Rock, there were plenty of apprehensive shrieks from the audience. Her rages were enough to intimidate even the most intrepid cookie-jar raider, so it was easy to sympathize with poor Otto the Fisher when he was caught red-handed with the radishes.

THE STORY of Rapunzel's abduction and imprisonment in a secluded tower by the wicked Witch is a familiar one even to preschool children, who made up a large part of the audience at the Southfield Civic Center. But it has been adapted lightheartedly by SRT founder and artistic director Ralph Valaska.

For those who never knew, he pointed out that Rapunzel's rather unusual name derived from her mother's yearning for little radishes. Valaska, like a transplanted Wizard of Oz, also was responsible for scenery and lights in this production, so he takes credit for a character who had no billing in the program, the Magic Rock.

Jeanine Head, seen heretofore with the Greenfield Village Players, was pretty, sweet, and somewhat simplified in the role of Rapunzel. Heroines of fairy tales customarily have a few minor character defects.

review

Her costume was just what one might expect a wicked witch with no experience in child rearing to select. Older girls in the audience sympathized mightily with her fate.

Her prince, played by Harry Wetzel also of Dearborn, added some welcome comedy with his everlasting combination of names, cheerful mugging, and chase routines with the Witch.

BARBARA BEAN and Greg Zellen, both of Farmington, portrayed the mother and father who lose their only child to the unpleasant old lady who lives next door. Ms. Bean, recently seen as Gretel in SRT's "Hansel and Gretel," brought charm to the role, although its scope was too limited to display her range of talents.

Zellen made the grief-stricken father believable and sympathetic, but his habit of rolling his eyes heavenward was disconcerting.

The Magic Rock, which gave the Witch her inspiration, created the effect that is intended to, and that is something which cannot always be said of special effects. It looked very much like a rock from out front, and when it glowed and spoke it was both eerie and intelligible.

The other prods and flashes of the Witch's powers were likewise startling enough to elicit gasps from the audience without sending a single little one home to a sleepless night.

The Brothers Grimm imagination included kidnapping, sorcery, blinding and death, but all was handled in an understated way. The transfiguration of the Witch into a tree was a nice touch and one that Peggy Thorp managed to carry off well.

The seal of approval was added by a fourth-grader as the audience filed out. "That was good. I hope I got to see 'The Emperor's New Clothes,'" she said, referring to SRT's next production.

what's at the movies

NEW RELEASES

ALL THAT JAZZ (R), Tour de force by writer-director Bob Fosse. Roy Scheider plays hard-driving, fast-living choreographer (Fosse) in "behind the scenes" story of unusual imagination and energy.

AMERICAN GIGOLO (R), Seamy tale about rich widows, dirty politics and a stud who gets framed for murder.

AND JUSTICE FOR ALL (R), Al Pacino is a young trial lawyer dedicated to his profession and profoundly troubled by the legal system.

APOCALYPSE NOW (R), Francis Ford Coppola's epic film of the Vietnam war interwoven with the characters and stunning impact of Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness."

AVALANCHE EXPRESS (PG), Adventure-suspense drama about KGB agent defecting to the West. Filmed in Italy and Germany, climactic scene is, you guessed it, avalanche.

BEING THERE (PG), Peter Sellers is a TV-educated economist in satire that pokes fun at our political and social conceits.

BLACK HOLE (PG), Disney's expensive entry into sci-fi, space adventure with strong cast and action story.

CHAPTER TWO (PG), Autobiographical Neil Simon story about a man starting over after death of his wife.

CRUISING (R), Heavy leather story of police undercover agent (Al Pacino) looking for psychotic killer in homosexual community.

CUBA (R), Sean Connery and Brooke Adams in romantic adventure during last days of Batista regime in Cuba.

THE DEER HUNTER (R), An emotionally gripping and violent film about the lives of three friends from a small steeltown as they are affected by the Vietnam war.

ELECTRIC HORSEMAN (PG), Jane Fonda is a reporter and Robert Redford an ex-roddeo champion in satirical romance.

THE EUROPEANS (PG), Exquisite period film of Henry James' wit, novel. Lee Remick is seductive adventuresome who returns to New England to seek a secure marriage.

FATSO (PG), Anne Bancroft debuts as writer-director and co-stars opposite Dom DeLuise in comedy about fat man's efforts to get thin.

THE FISH THAT SAVED PITTSBURGH (PG), Actors and pro-athletes abound in comedy about a water boy who revitalizes a slumping basketball team.

THE LAST MARRIED COUPLE IN AMERICA (R), George Segal and Natalie Wood in sometimes abusive comedy about problems of staying married in the midst of friends who are divorcing.

THE FOG (R), Horror film from John Carpenter, who directed "Halloween." Supernatural fog, associated with legend of mariners rising from their graves and seeking vengeance, creates havoc in coastal village.

GOING IN STYLE (PG), Offbeat comedy about three pensioners who decide to "go in style."

HERO AT LARGE (PG), A struggling actor (John Ritter) tries to live up to image of his role as Captain Avenger.

HOT STUFF (PG), Dom DeLuise directed and stars in slick comedy about undercover police fencing operation.

THE IN-LAWS (PG), Hilarious comedy with Peter Falk and Alan Arkin as near-relatives who not only plan a wedding but rip off the U.S. Mint.

THE JERK (R), Steve Martin in comedy about a white boy raised by black sharecroppers.

KRAMER VS. KRAMER (PG), Perceptive, well-acted drama about a broken marriage and a custody battle. Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep star.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

- G General audiences admitted.
- PG Parental guidance suggested. All ages admitted.
- R Restricted. Adult must accompany person under 18.
- X No one under 18 admitted.

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