

# Fairy tale musical is charming



Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's picturesque "Into the Woods," a fairy tale musical for any age, opened on Broadway to mixed reviews — mostly lofty critical judgment that nothing new was said about the adult psychological messages of fairy tales, but how often does one do a psychological interpretation of a fairy tale?

## ON STAGE

### "Into the Woods"

★ Theater: Avon Players, Theater Road, 1 1/4 miles east off of Rochester Road in Rochester Hills.

★ Curtain time: 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, through May 21.

★ Tickets: \$10 with senior citizen and student discounts available. Call (810) 375-1300.

Avon Players triumphs in its interpretation of Sondheim's deep, dark messages, and the results are charming and enchanting. Director Kimberley Britt achieves this gentle blend with a masterful mix of whimsy, humor and poignancy; adept musical direction is by Lee George.

"Into the Woods" does present several messages (i.e., conquering personal fears and risks going into psychological woods), but with a delicate expressiveness that never preaches and is always captivating.

Sondheim and Lapine have created a kingdom where our favorite fairy tale characters are neighbors. "Prologue: Into the Woods" is the wonderfully executed company opening that sets the fanciful tone of the show as our characters wish for various desires to be fulfilled.

An evil witch, played deliciously corsive by Sharon Hendricks, sets the pace with a bribe of sorts for a childless baker and his wife (Kevin Edwards and Tami Mough).

The tales entwine when the witch croaks for the baker (whose father died in a baking accident) and his wife to find a "Cow white as milk (Jack) and the Beanstalk), a cape red as blood (Little Red Riding Hood), hair yellow as corn (Rapunzel), and a slipper pure as gold (Cinderella)." If the items can be found, the baker and his wife will have a

well as Jack's mother.

Act II brings on the surprises and messages as the characters meet new challenges not in the original fairy tales. Rapunzel becomes her dysfunctional childhood, while Cinderella faces discontent at the castle. Eponine Williams is funny as Rapunzel, as is Jennifer Combs as Cinderella. Combs' interpretation of "On the Steps of the Palace" creates a cozy ambience.

Anthony Sherman is amusingly droll as the bespectacled narrator with a bow-tie. Lisa Jesawein and Julie Thomerson add lots of funny punch as Cinderella's sisters. The show is pulled together with fantastic scenic design by George Kozak, gorgeous costumes by Kris Murrell-Diedrich, and lighting by John Deierlein.

"Into the Woods" is a lyrical treat by Sondheim, and the Avon Players' production is one of which he would be proud.

Sally Dubats of Royal Oak is an actress, director and teacher, who teaches at community theaters in the metropolitan area.

## REVIEW

child, so they embark on their journey into the scary woods with mixed anticipation. "It Takes Two" is sung beautifully by Edwards and Mough, only together can they get through the woods. Edwards' facial expressions, at turns comic or morose, tell his story well.

Little Red Riding Hood is performed with a plus energy by talented Rebecca Bahling. Ron Williams is terrific as the Wolf as he sings with sexy and lustful glee. "There's no possible way to describe what you feel when you're talking to your meal."

Williams also doubles as Cinderella's Prince. With Matt Draving as Rapunzel's Prince, the two sing a very comical "Agony," explaining with regal exaggeration the woes a handsome, macho, hero/prince faces when he can't get his princess.

Jack (the one that climbs the beanstalk) is performed well by Ken Grider. Grider's perky interpretation of Jack is right on the mark. Sharon Thomas also fares

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ing out every possible laugh at his victims' expense, makes him all the more fun to watch.

As Merteuil, Myers is Valmont's match and then some. Her performance is lusty, bitchy and conniving. Her flaming red hair adds just the right accent.

Jill Lamphere gives a heart-

Entertaining Choices lists upcoming concerts, plays, dance performances and special events. Send items to be considered for publication to: Kacey Hygonik, Entertainment editor, The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is 691-7279.

## COMMUNITY THEATER

★ ST. BEDE PLAYERS  
Gilbert & Sullivan's "Ruddigore," 8 p.m. May 6-7, May 13-14, 2 p.m. May 15 at Southfield High School. Tickets \$6 adults, \$4 students and senior citizens in advance. Call 557-7245 or 540-6943.

★ ARO PRODUCTIONS  
"Ten Little Indians" opens 8 p.m. Friday, May 6 and continues weekends through May 22 at the Burgh on the northeast corner of Civic Center Drive and Berg Road in Southfield. Call 354-9362 for tickets.

## PROFESSIONAL

★ BIRMINGHAM  
"The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," directed by Worth Grier, opens 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 10 and continues through June 12 at the theater, 211 S. Woodward. Call (810) 644-3533 for tickets or Ticketmaster, (810) 645-6666.

★ MEADOW BROOK  
Neil Simon's "Broadway Bound," continues through May 15 at the theater on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. Call (810) 377-3300 for tickets or Ticketmaster (810) 645-6666.

## JAZZ

★ BRAD FELT TRIO  
Tuba-driven modern jazz at Bravo Coffee House, 19739 W. Twelve Mile at Evergreen, Southfield 8-11 p.m. Friday, May 6. Call 443-0511 for information.

## CHILDREN

★ MARQUIS  
"The Princess and the Goblin," 11:30 a.m. Saturdays through June 18. Call (313) 349-8110.

## CLASSICAL

★ LANGFORD SINGERS  
Spring Concert featuring the works of Grieg, Mozart, Elgar, Copland, Gilbert and Sullivan, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, May 7, North Congregational Church, 26275

Northwestern, Southfield. Tickets \$8, seniors and students \$6, at the door or call (810) 682-5028.

★ LYRIC CHAMBER ENSEMBLE  
Golden Rain Percussion Ensemble and Vanguard Saxophone Ensemble in a Latin-style brunch concert 11:15 a.m. Sunday, May 15 at the Gem Theatre in Detroit. Tickets \$20. Brunch served 10:45 a.m. and is included in ticket price. Call (810) 357-1111.

## Dance concert

Cranbrook Kingswood's annual Spring Dance Concert, featuring modern dance by the Cranbrook Kingswood Dancers will be 8 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday, May 12-14 at the Cranbrook Performing Arts Center, 550 Long Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills. Tickets are \$4 and available at the door. Call (810) 645-3441 for information.

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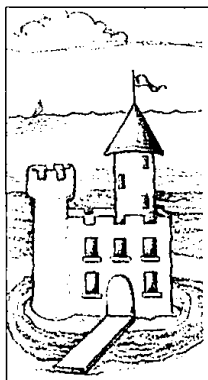
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