

## THE WEEKEND

### FRIDAY



Ridgedale Players presents "Wait Until Dark," 8 p.m. at the playhouse, 205 W. Long Lake, Troy. Tickets \$11, (248) 988-7049

### SATURDAY



Clarkston Toy Show features more than 70 tables of vintage toys, dolls, trains, advertising, cap guns, Star Wars figures, mechanical banks and American tin pieces, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, 5660 Maybee Road, Clarkston. Admission \$3, free for children ages 12 and younger, (248) 394-0925

### SUNDAY



Boys Choir of Harlem performs 7 p.m. at Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University, Ann Arbor. Tickets \$12-\$26, (734) 764-2538



Hot Tip: B.B. King - King of the Blues - plays the Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit with Bobby Bland, 8 p.m. Tickets \$27.50 and \$36, (313) 983-6611

## Behind the magic of flying

"Everyone has a dream, whether it's on stage or off stage," said Paul Ruben, who pulls the strings to send Peter Pan airborne. "For me, this is living a dream."

He's not alone. Each performance, Ruben stands atop a 10-foot ladder wearing a tress while a wire is tied around his waist. On the other end of the wire is Cathy Rigby, waiting to make the ultimate stage entrance.

At the right time, Ruben jumps from the ladder, and Rigby ascends about 12 feet. Typically, audiences react with a gasp.

The effect is the theatrical answer to pixie

Please see FLYING, E2



You can fly: Cathy Rigby (Peter Pan, left to right) with Michael LaVolpe (John), Paul Tiesler (Michael) and Elisa Sagardia (Wendy) star in "Peter Pan."

# Peter Pan

## flies into town

By FRANK PROVENZANO  
STAFF WRITER

It wasn't easy explaining to my two young sons that I actually talked to Wendy Darling, most popularly known as Peter Pan's real-world fancy who travels with him to Neverland. Apparently, even a 2 1/2 and 6-year-old set limitations on logic.

Their incredulous response: "You?" After all, they figure, I'm from the wacky, all-too-serious adult world. (Ha, in age only.)

The coincidental discussion with Wendy, I explained, came about because she, the other Darlings, Hook, Smee, Tinker Bell and the boy in green tights who never grows up will soon land in town.

Beginning this Wednesday through Sunday, Jan. 25 the ageless characters will appear at the Detroit Opera House in the headed-for-Broadway production, "Peter Pan."

If you think it's tough keeping St. Nick's secret, try telling a 2 1/2 year old preparing to fly from his perch on the couch that the baby powder he's sprinkled on his back isn't magic flying dust.

But then, magic works in strange ways.

That fearless toddler invariably takes a leap. He lands feet first. But his imagination soars. He figures he is flying. Who's going to argue?

Ah, you see, Peter Pan cannot only fly, he's for real. It's just

adults who keep him earth-bound. Peter Pan is as real as memories of long afternoons of endless play in a world only bound by the limits of imagination.

In a coherent moment, adults might call Neverland by another name: paradise.

### A play about play

Wendy, played by the diminutive Elisa Sagardia, has the boundless energy and innocence to transform James M. Barrie's 1902 classic into a modern-day parable about the "game" of life.

Barrie's novel, "The Little White Bird," included six chapters about Peter Pan. In 1904, the stories were condensed into

a play which first opened in London, and then had productions throughout the first half of the century.

The musical version to be seen by local audiences first appeared on Broadway in 1954, and starred Mary Martin in the title role. Eventually, it's expected the current production, starring Cathy Rigby, will land on Broadway, probably in December.

In the late 1970s, "Peter Pan" was reprised with Sandy Duncan. And in 1991, Rigby brought her unmatched athleticism to the role in a national tour. She's received wide critical acclaim and a Tony nomination as best actress for her role.

While the popular focus is on Peter Pan's instructive whimsy, it's Wendy who provides the grounding for the story's timeless appeal.

The fantasy is enhanced by four elaborate sets: the nursery, Neverland, the underground and the pirate ship. And, of course, pixie dust spread everywhere.

With one foot in the real-world and the other in the Neverland fantasy scape, Wendy is arguably the central character.

"If the audience doesn't believe Wendy believes in Peter Pan, then they won't either," said Sagardia, who first appeared in Detroit four years ago in "Evita."

"I never thought of Detroit as a theater town until we stayed there (for a month)," she said from Palm Springs where the company was finishing up its west coast run before heading to the Midwest.

"Detroit is incredibly receptive, a city that opens its arms," said Sagardia, who has an unconventional training for the stage.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in psychology at UCLA, Sagardia was deciding whether to attend graduate school when she heard about an audition for the young mistress in "Evita."

Her last onstage appearance was in high school.

"I was over 18, but I could look like a teenager," she said. That seems appropriate. Wendy

Please see PAN, E2

## FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT

# Join the cast of Sesame Street on an imaginary journey



By KEELY WYONIK  
STAFF WRITER

Who says you can't go back to Sesame Street after you're all grown up?

"Most of the parents taking their kids to see Sesame Street Live grew up on Sesame Street," said program director Kim Gladman. "Sesame Street is 26 years old. It's our 15th season live."

This year's presentation - Sesame Street Live "1-2-3... Imagine," invites audiences to join Big Bird, Burt and Ernie, and the rest of the gang as they explore their imaginations in a 90-minute musical extravaganza.

"This show is unlike any other," said Gladman. "There's a live human being - Sam the Postman - who delivers postcards, which takes the characters on imaginary

journeys. Having a live person on stage gives the show a bit more reality. Sam interacts with the characters."

Burt receives a postcard from his Cousin Bubbles, an underwater photographer, and then imagines he's under the sea.

Oscar vacations on the trashy beaches of Club Mud, Elmo skips to rain forest rhythms and Ernie captains a ship on the high seas.

"It's a wonderful show," said Gladman. "These are the children's heroes, their idols, and they learn from them. They encourage children to tap into their imaginations. You can go anywhere, or be anything you want to be, but first you have to have an imaginary mind set."

Parents will recognize some of their favorite songs from Sesame

Street, and children will know the words to some of the newer songs. There are also some songs written especially for this show.

Some grandparents might never have been to Sesame Street, but chances are pretty good they've been to the Fox.

"There's a lot of nostalgia," said Gladman, and Bill Lee of Birmingham, senior director of marketing for Olympia Entertainment. "Parents and grandparents taking kids to the Fox will say 'I remember when I took your mom or grandma to a movie here.'"

For many children, Sesame Street Live is their first exposure to a live performance, and being in the theater.

Except for performances in New

### Sesame Street Live's "1-2-3... Imagine!"

■ When: Twenty-four performances, Wednesday, Jan. 21 through Sunday, Feb. 1.

■ Where: Fox Theatre, 2211 Woodward Ave., Detroit.  
■ Tickets: \$15, \$12 & \$9, (limited number of \$22.50 VIP seats also available), (248) 433-1515. Call (313) 983-6011 for more information, or (313) 596-3211, the 24-hour information on accessible seating and special needs. Groups of 20 or more can call (313) 983-3099 for details on discounts, and ticket availability.

### Highlights:

■ Bring a slightly used children's book, in good condition to the 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 22, performance and receive a new Sesame Street Golden Book. The used books will be donated to a literacy charity program.

Please see JOURNEY, E2

Musical extravaganza: Join Sam the Postman, and the cast of Sesame Street Live, as they invite audiences to put on join them on some amazing imaginary journeys in "1-2-3... Imagine!"