



GO:

WHAT: "The Little Prince."

WHEN: 7 p.m. today, Saturday and March 30 and 31; 2:30 p.m. Sunday and April 1.

LOCATION: Pensacola Little Theatre, 400 S. Jefferson St.

TICKETS: \$18, \$16 and \$14; half price for children 16 and younger.

DETAILS: 432-2042, or visit www.pensacolalittletheatre.com.

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PLT makes magic with 'The Little Prince'



Andy Metzger
(Unknown address)

Once again, Pensacola Little Theatre's Treehouse Theatre program has chosen a charming and magical tale to bring to the PLT Mainstage. "The Little Prince" opens tonight, and after seeing this production in rehearsal, I couldn't decide if I was more taken with the story or the cast presenting it.

Many people will have fond childhood memories of "The Little Prince," a novella by Antoine de Saint-Exupery about a little boy from a far-off planet who stirs the imagination of a pilot who has crashed in the middle of the Sahara.

Over the course of many conversations, the Prince introduces the pilot to a variety of characters he has met on his travels. They include a coquettish and demanding rose, a self-deceiving queen with no subjects, a conceited man, a scary snake and a jumpy fox. And the pilot, too, embarks on his own journey of discovery, and uncovers the person he would much rather be.

I had read the novella in my youth, but seeing "The Little Prince" on stage brought the story to life in a new light.

First, there is the "odd couple" of the Aviator, played by veteran local actor, Stephen Lott, and the Little Prince, played by eight-year-old Payden Anderson.

The Aviator must be the one character who is rooted in a "practical" reality, but not unshakably so, and Lott is very strong in his portrayal of a vulnerable yet teachable everyman.

The Little Prince must convey a fanciful other-worldliness, and at the same, represent the embodiment of everything crucial to true happiness in this world.

I have never seen an 8-year-old, amateur or professional, do a better job with such a demanding role as the one turned in by Payden. He has far more lines than anyone on stage, and he handles his responsibilities as the play's central character like a pro.

The conversations between the Aviator and the Little Prince would seem to symbolize the adult psyche reaching out to the child within, longing to recapture knowledge lost. "The Little Prince" is a gentle, meditative piece that celebrates the power of friendship, and there is also considerable humor.

Tiffany Lemaster, 17, is an absolute scene-stealer as the

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wary, fidgety Fox who wants to be tamed. She is funny and endearing, and her interactions with Payden during the "taming ritual" are marvelous. It is the Fox who delivers the story's most famous line: "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly, what is essential is invisible to the eye."

Other very strong performances are turned in by Lia Malamo, 17, as the sinister yet honest Snake, and Glenellen Anderson, 12, as the temperamental Rose about whom The Little Prince is so worried.

The remaining cast members are Sarah Adamson, Connor Bond, Madeleyn Buxton, Leah Chesney, Haleigh Del Gallo, Luke Evans, Savannah Green, Erin Hart, Rebecca Jolly, Brady Kirby, Cody Moore, Leah Saccomanno, Lindsey Saccomanno, Heather Power, Dekarius Small and Grace Tyson.

Johnnie Odom directs the production. He is assisted by Jean Odom as assistant director, Amanda Hughes as student director, Shirley Raschke as production coordinator, Jim Culton as technical director, Bob Gandrup as set and lighting designer, Rodney Walker as sound designer, LaVonne French as choreographer, Kimberly Gandrup as flutist, Jeannie Atwell as costumer and Michelle Rea as props mistress.

"I come from a theatrical family," said Johnnie Odom, who is directing his first play. "My mother, Jean Odom, who has worked with so many local shows, has been a great help to me during this production."

Next week's column will cover "Broadway a La Carte 2007," which takes place at the Pensacola Junior College Ashmore Fine Arts Auditorium Thursday through April 1.

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