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REVIEW: The Tail of Peter Rabbit

Summer Circle Theatre

It's the Tail's Tale at Summer Circle

by Bridgette Redman



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Rob Roznowski followed two great traditions with his new play for young audiences, both with long ears and a white fluffy tail. "The Tail of Peter Rabbit" adapts the tale of Beatrix Potter while giving an equal nod to Bugs Bunny. The story is from Potter, the style is pure Looney Tunes. As family theater it makes sure it has something for both kids and parents alike.

For the kids, Director Deric McNish infuses the show with energy, keeping the action high at all times. There is music (written and composed by Chelle Peterson) and interaction with the audience. There are chase scenes, puppets, funny costumes and physical hi-jinks.

For the adults, this hour-long play is filled with clever word-play, meta moments that talk about the actors and the play, and a faithfulness to a classic story that encourages nostalgia.

From the curtain speech to the final moment of the play, the players make sure the audience knows the play's title isn't a misspelling. It is the tail, not the tale, of Peter Rabbit, and Ryan Duda delights in wiggling that tail for all to see to the dismay of his mother and proper sisters.

Duda is perfect for the role of Peter Rabbit with the way he hops all over the stage and is in constant motion. His jumps are high, and he's got the energy of a toddler

with a voice that can keep up with it. He's great at interacting with the audience and quickly wins the hearts of children and adults alike. He's going on a grand adventure and feels stifled by the rules that would keep him safe.

The mother--who also doubles as some sparrows and a mouse (the latter with complaints about having to stoop so low)--is played by Jacqueline Wheeler. She sings several solos and is the counter-balance to Peter's energy. She is calm and the center of the family. Wheeler brings dignity to the role while still making her loveable and sympathetic.

Katie Noyes plays four characters, three of them at the same time. She is Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail--two done with stuffed animal rabbits dressed in 19th century finery and one with rabbit ears and makeup. She holds a rabbit on each arm and separates them when the much-ignored Cottontail wants to say something. She later plays the Cat as well. All of her roles are finely portrayed and she even manages to sing a trio with herself, no small task.

As the "villain" of the piece, Lee Cleaveland's Farmer MacGregor cuts a comic figure. With a stuffed belly, he waddles onto the stage and makes the most of accent, physical comedy and voice. His chase scenes with Duda are wonderful and he makes a villain that never frightens but always entertains. He also recovered well from some costume failures opening night, adapting them into the show as much as possible.

The actors had to fight with some technical difficulties opening night--costumes that didn't cooperate and set pieces that didn't want to stay up. However, there was enough wackiness and energy in the show that they were minor issues and the distraction was minimal.

As a new work, "The Tail of Peter Rabbit" is a fun script with entertaining music. It's a great outdoor show to take the whole family too for either of the next two weekends.

SHOW DETAILS:

The Tail of Peter Rabbit
Summer Circle
Michigan State University, Lansing
June 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, and 27 at 6:30 p.m.
Price: free
[Summer Circle](#)