

# 'Peter Pan' will hook families with its darling performances

By **MARTY ROSEN**  
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It has been 100 years since James M. Barrie published "Peter and Wendy," the basis for "Peter Pan," and 50 years since the musical, with music by Mark Charlap and lyrics by Carolyn Leigh (and contributions from Jule Styne, Betty Comden

## Theater review

'Peter Pan'

**Next performances:** Today and tomorrow, 8 p.m., Sunday, 7:30 p.m., Iroquois Amphitheater, 5216 New Cut Road. Ends June 27. (502) 361-3100.

and Adolph Green), made its premiere on Broadway with Mary Martin in the lead.

Music Theater Louisville is celebrating those anniversaries this summer with a delightful, rambunctious production at the recently renovated Iroquois Amphitheater. This is a tale of Victorian youths (the Darling children) whisked away from their loving but staid parents (Jennifer Poliskie and Jay Nelson) to enchanted Neverland Island, populated by pirates, ticking crocodiles, dancing natives, a flickering fairy called Tinker Bell and a tribe of Lost Boys, bound and determined that they'll never grow up.

And the leader of the Lost Boys, of course, is Peter Pan.

Pan is also the leader of any

## STAGE A REVIEW

production of the musical, and here the role is fully inhabited by Chelsea Pattison in a bold, surefooted performance that will satisfy both kids and adults.

Pan spends plenty of time soaring high above the stage in this performance, and it's doubtful there was ever a Pan happier to hover at great heights. Boyish, muscular and at times vulnerable, Pattison's Pan is a dervish whether tumbling across the stage, swooping down on Captain Hook (Peter Holloway) during an airborne duel or swaggering through songs including "I've Got to Crow" and "I Won't Grow Up."

And when Tinker Bell is in danger — and the only cure is for the children in the audience to believe in fairies — Pattison exhorts the crowd with a panicked desperation that would be impossible to resist.

From top to bottom, this is a well-coached production. Alaina Mills plays Wendy, oldest of the Darling children, with gentle authority; her childlike flirtation with Pan is appropriately tentative and wist-

ful. And Holloway's Captain Hook is a broad comic figure, wrought with noisy bluster and big gestures. Pirate waltzes and tarantellas give him and his crew ample opportunity for physical comedy.

Tiger Lily (Melanie Niemann) gracefully leads her tribe of native dancers — and a choreographed battle in which the Natives and the Lost Boys serve one another is a fine piece of dance.

The Darling siblings (Brandon Horrar, Alexandra Smith and Reese Milburn) are by turns sweet and comic. Katie Campbell (Slightly) and Chris Haulter (Smee) bring energy to their cameos. And Jim Dersch (Nana, the Darlings' flopped dog) and Matthew Chappell (the ticking crocodile who strikes fear in Captain Hook's heart) deserve high marks for some fine crawling about the stage.

Director/choreographer Mirla Criste, musical directors Elizabeth Huling and Craig Swatt, set designer Kelly Wiegand Mangan and costume designer Donna E. Lawrence have combined to mount a fast-paced spectacle full of humor.

The first-act aerial ballet as Pan sprinkles the Darlings with fairy dust and teaches them to fly is a giddy pleasure, and clever sets and colorful costumes evoke the fantastic pleasures of Neverland and Hook's pirate ship, the Jolly Roger.