

‘Peter and the Starcatcher’ proves poetic, pensive, punny

Brandon Boring, Contributor Sep 4, 2017

Peter Pan is known worldwide and has entertained children for decades. However, as a child you may have wondered how Peter Pan magically became the boy who never grows up, or perhaps you wondered what Captain Hook was doing before he began his villainous, pirate life tormenting the inhabitants of Neverland. Luckily, the members of Clarence Brown Theatre have attempted to answer those questions.

‘Peter and the Starcatcher,’ directed by Casey Sams, debuted last week on Aug. 30. The show has since accumulated a large amount of well-deserved admiration, interesting everyone from age eight to 80.

The play offers itself as a prequel to the beloved Peter Pan stories.

The play manages to simultaneously explore themes of innocence, maturation and homelessness while still making every single audience member giggle with laughter. Several times throughout the performance, Peter, played by Jason Edward Cook, plucked at our heartstrings with moving monologues of loneliness and a tortured past. Before the audience could finish shedding tears, the scene changed, and we caught ourselves laughing over Black Stache (Charles Pasternak) and his constant inability to conquer Molly (Ellen Nikbakht) and her new friend.

The characters brought the story to life and were a highlight of the play. Many audience members engaged with the personalities of the witty, animated actors.

“(Black Stache) made lots of funny puns, and I really like the drama that surrounded his name,” Joanna Huntoon, an audience member said. “Anytime that his name was mentioned, everyone would just start screaming. I thought that he was totally flamboyant and ridiculous. I just think that that’s funny. That’s enjoyable to watch.”

During intermission, people flocked to the lobby of the Clarence Brown Theatre, leaving for some fresh air or seizing the opportunity to talk to each other about how much they enjoyed the performance to that point.

“It’s pretty good. I think the way that they’ve incorporated modern pop culture into the jokes and other things is great,” Kieran Phelps, a Knoxville native and UT student, said. “As well as the subtle ways that actors have performed when not in the spotlight has made it very humorous to just look around and see what’s going on.”

In the second act, action escalated and forces clashed. Connections to the Peter Pan that most people know are made, and loose ends are all cleanly tied up but not without a few tears and laughs along the way.

Overall, ‘Peter and the Starcatcher’ is an absolutely wonderful production. The cast, crew and all come together to form a delightful piece of art. It’s a family friendly show that still manages to crack jokes at the expense of Queen Victoria, Ayn Rand and Michael Jackson; how could it not be good?