

These Kids Are Pros

The founder of Ecstatic Theatrics, Jeannette Jaquish, is not one to take the easy road. She writes, directs and plays a major acting role in her latest musical comedy, *Slipperzzzz! Cobb and the Twelve Dancing Princesses*. Featuring the talents of both children and adults, *Slipperzzzz!* has it all: singing, dancing, slapstick, tricky stage combat and even some truly heartfelt moments.

Based on a 17th century German folktale, Jaquish's version gives personality to the princesses and ties up loose ends the traditional oral folktale left dangling. In this version a Young Cobbler (Sam Smiley) spurns the advances of his hometown's less-than-attractive female admirers (all, I believe, played by boys) and dreams of marrying a beautiful princess. He leaves the town of Hobnobbitt to seek out a bride. Along the way meets an Old Lady (Jaquish) who tells him the sad story of her life through an interpretive dance. She was once a happy wife and mother but was lured away by a magic spell and forced into slavery. The Old Lady also tells Cobb about a king who has 12 princess daughters and encourages him to search for his bride among them.

The princesses wake up every morning exhausted, with their shoes worn out. Their father, King Leo (Scott Wiley), and his vizier (Kael Bronson) devise a contest in which a succession of princes will attempt to find out where the princesses go at night. The prince who succeeds will marry the princess of his choosing. If he fails, he will go to the dungeon (actually just a mop closet with the word "dungeon" written on the door).

Meanwhile, the Old Cobbler quits his job out of frustration at all the worn-out shoes. Cobb is hired and catches the eye of young Princess Jonquil (played in alternating performances by Chloe Cameron and Paige Trammel). The secrets of the Princesses (as well as that of their missing mother) are revealed at the end of the play.

The script is witty and there were several laugh-out-loud lines ("You saved me just in time! I was running out of British slang!") and Jaquish's writing has a very distinct voice. For a kids' show, one might think the dialogue would be simplistic, but she does not dumb anything down. The cast did an amazing job with a word-heavy script and one-liners that come fast



Curtain Call

JENNIFER POIRY-PROUGH

SLIPPERZZZZ! COBB AND THE 12 DANCING PRINCESSES

11 a.m. Saturdays thru Sept. 28
Fort Wayne Cinema Center
437 E. Berry St., Fort Wayne
Tix.: \$6 • 260-750-9013
www.ecstatic-theatrics.com

and furious from a lot of different actors, one after the other.

There were more musical numbers than I had been expecting, and the choreography was more complex. For such a large number of dancers in such a small space, the cast pulled off a lot of choreography without tripping over anyone. The songs were funny and catchy, with lyrics by Jaquish and sung to tunes by Kevin MacLeod. The one that is stuck in my head is from "Merry Go," and includes the lyric, "Where do we go? We don't know. Borneo? Tokyo? Favorite dance scenario: Dancing with our Daddy-o."

Most of the performers adopt British accents for their roles and do an admirable job. Kael Bronson has a particularly good command of his roles (Town Crier, Vizier, and King Mudrid) and has excellent comedic timing. He also interacted well with Ary Sakri (as Mudrid's bumbling son Lurk), who also has a distinctively funny way of a delivering a line and sardonic facial expressions.

Smiley is a sweet-faced Cobb who captures a range of emotions, from annoyance to kindness to love-struck angst. He also does an effective bit of sleight-of-hand in his first scene with the Old Lady.

As King Leo, Wiley is one of the few adults in the cast and manages to be pompous and despotic without losing his fatherly vulnerability and charm. Scott Sarrazin (Prince Duncan) steals his scene as the goofy, mugging prince who was tricked out of his duties by the promise of a cinnamon Danish.

The script allows each of the 12 princesses to shine, but I was particularly impressed with Katherine Schauer (as the oldest princess, Violet) who, during a lively musical number, dispatched with a dropped prop by grabbing it with her bare foot and flinging it to the back of the stage in the middle of a dance step.

The play ran a little long during its opening performance (two

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Now Playing

THE 39 STEPS — Fast-paced whodunit comedy adapted from the novel by John Buchan from the movie by Alfred Hitchcock, presented by Fort Wayne Civic Theatre, 8 p.m. **Friday-Saturday, Sept. 13-14 & 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 15**, Arts United Center, Fort Wayne, \$17-\$26, 424-5220, www.fwcivic.org

THE FOX ON THE FAIRWAY — Comedy about love, life and golf with a tournament between two private country clubs, 7:30 p.m. **Friday-Saturday, Sept. 13-14; 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 15; 7:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Sept. 20-21**, First Presbyterian Theater, Fort Wayne, \$10-\$24 (full-time students free, reservation required), 422-6329, firstpres-fw.org

SLIPPERZZZZ! COBB AND THE 12 DANCING PRINCESSES — Ecstatic Theatrics presents a comedy musical thriller about tattered slippers and a brave shoemaker, 11 a.m. **Saturdays, Sept. 14, 21 & 28**, Cinema Center, Fort Wayne, \$6, 750-9013, www.ecstatic-theatrics.com

STAR CROSSED — First annual FWDC fundraising event with a "choose-your-own-adventure" theatrical experience featuring a dance performance with Romeo + Juliet and music by Orange Opera and Metavari, 7:30-10 p.m. **Friday, Sept. 13**, Embassy Theatre & Indiana Hotel, Fort Wayne, \$35 thru Ticketmaster, \$45 d.o.s., 424-6574, www.fwdc.org

Asides

AUDITIONS

BLUFFTON STREET FAIR IDOL 2013 (SEPT. 21) — Singing audition to compete in the Idol contest and sing on the Main Stage at the Bluffton Street Fair; ages 17 and up, 6 p.m. **Sunday, Sept. 15**, Life Church Auditorium, Fort Wayne, 824-4351, www.blufftonstreetfair.com

SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY (OCT. 21-23) — Singing and non-singing roles for Paul Allen's stage adaptation of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, a collection of monologues of haunting tales; Seven adult men, four adult women and one male youth (age 8 to 14) needed, 2-5 p.m. **Sunday, Sept. 15**, Calhoun Street Soups, Salads & Spirits, Fort Wayne, 579-6277

THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN (FEB. 7-16, 2014) — Cast requires three men (ages 18-65), four women (ages 25-65), one boy (age 12-16), one girl (age 8-12) and at least six dancers for the all for One family-friendly children's fantasy, 7 p.m. **Tuesday, Sept. 17**, First Missionary Church, Fort Wayne, 622-4610, www.allforonefw.org

INSTRUCTION

FORT WAYNE YOUTH THEATRE CLASSES — Hour-long classes for 8-week sessions in drama, voice, dance, technical theatre and more for ages 3 to 18, times and dates vary, classes begin **Sept. 14**, Arts United Center, Fort Wayne, \$100, 422-6900, www.fortwayneyouththeatre.org

Upcoming Productions

SEPTEMBER

ALTAR EGOS — The do's and don'ts of an American wedding, 7 p.m. **Friday-Saturday, Sept. 19-20**, Carroll High School Small Auditorium, Fort Wayne, \$5, 338-5330

DANZA — Fort Wayne Ballet performance featuring contemporary dance and 1940s music with a live big band sound, 8 p.m. **Saturday, Sept. 21**, Arts United Center, Fort Wayne, \$23-\$32, 484-9646, www.fortwayneballet.org

FIVE WOMEN WEARING THE SAME DRESS — An IPFW Department of Theatre comical performance about the bond between five bridesmaids; contains adult language and content, 8 p.m. **Friday-Saturday, Sept. 27-28; 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 3-5**; sign language performance 2 p.m. **Sunday, Oct. 6**, Williams Theatre, IPFW, \$5-\$15 thru IPFW box office 481-6555, www.ipfw.edu/theatre

FABLES, FOLK & FAIRY TALES — The family series by Fort Wayne Ballet's Youth Company; *Rodeo*, 10 & 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, Sept. 28; Ferdinand the Bull**, 10 & 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, Feb. 22, 2014; The Little Mermaid**, 10 & 11:30 a.m. **Saturday, April 26**, Auer Center for Arts & Culture, Fort Wayne, \$10, 484-9646, www.fortwayneballet.org

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