

Captain Hook latest in TAG's Christmas pantomimes

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By ANDREA NEMETZ Entertainment Reporter

Wee glitches all part of the onstage antics



Carol McKee stars as Pirate Roger, Lowell Shore is Captain Hook and Nancy Jamison is Pirate Jimmy in the Theatre Arts Guild production of *Captain Hook's Revenge*, now onstage on at the Pond Playhouse in Halifax. (TED PRITCHARD / Staff)

During a dress rehearsal for *Captain Hook's Revenge*, the title character forgot his hook.

No problem, says Angela Butler, who is co-directing the show for Halifax's Theatre Arts Guild with Lorne Abramson.

"The people there thought it was part of the show," she laughs.

That's the beauty of pantomime — anything goes.

TAG has been doing British-style Christmas pantomimes for 13 years and Butler has been involved for the last six. She directed last year's *Beauty and the Beast* and acted in four other shows.

She and Abramson, who has co-written pantomimes for TAG in the past, along with musical director Bunny Shore and choreographer Melanie Abramson (Lorne's daughter), began working on this year's show in April.

Three-times-a-week rehearsals began in September for the 21-member cast, aged 14 to 66, from Dartmouth, Bedford, Halifax and Prospect. On Dec. 1, *Capt. Hook's Revenge* began its 2½-week run.

The show is at the Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Rd., till Dec. 17, and the five matinee performances are sold out. Limited tickets are available for shows on Dec. 8-10 and Dec. 15-17 at 8 p.m.

The popular pantomimes have become part of the holiday traditions of many families and are TAG's biggest-selling shows.

"This year, we went in the Spryfield Santa Claus parade for the first time. We had a banner and dressed up as characters from past pantomimes and, as we went by, people would say they love going to the pantomimes."

In fact, at least three of the seven young actors in this year's cast remember going to TAG to see pantomimes, says Butler, noting there will be many new faces onstage including three older ladies playing pirates who have never acted before.

Fifteen-year-old Emma Cruddas of Dartmouth is Peter Pan.

"This is her third panto. She was a pink dog and danced but didn't speak in A Spirit for Evermore. Last year, she was a boy and a man in Beauty and the Beast. She's an amazing talent and we wanted to showcase her."

Lowell Shore is Captain Hook.

The two leads are quite good together, said Butler. "There are some veterans but the majority are new to pantomime. It's a different form. Sometimes people think too realistically. Panto is all fantasy and out there; you have to think outside the box."

Pantomime is also a lot of fun, says Butler, a pharmacy technician at Shoppers Drug Mart who has been involved with TAG for 12 years.

"I like the energy, the interaction with the audience. You banter with the audience and they react to you. It's usually a large cast, musical and always fun. You get to carry on. The most fun is when things go off the rails. You get to ad lib; the audience thinks it's part of the show."

As an actor, her favourite pantomime was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, in which she played a dwarf, because "there was such a brotherhood."

This is the first year TAG will present Captain Hook's Revenge, adapted from J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan by Richard Coleman.

Butler thinks it's a great fit for pantomime.

"It's geared toward using your imagination and helps create the illusion of being a kid again. There are a number of versions of Peter Pan in pantomime and we picked this one because it stays within the same storyline but has pantomime jargon."

Tickets are \$16 or \$12 for students, members and seniors, and they are available now through www.ticketatlantic.com, at participating Atlantic Superstores or by phone at 451-1221.

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