

# The Wire

By Scarlett Ridgeway Savage

December 28, 2005

*When the first baby laughed for the first time, the laugh broke into a thousand pieces and they all went skipping about, and that was the beginning of fairies.*

—“Peter Pan”

In the late 1800s, J.M. Barrie enjoyed some success on the London stage, not to mention socially, although his behavior was seen by many as odd. Described as asexual by some and fey by most, he preferred to spend his time with children or writing plays that celebrated what antics they could get up to; and he didn't really give a damn what anyone thought of either activity. Upon his death, he directed that all proceeds from his “Peter Pan” story benefit the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London, a copyright arrangement that continues to this day.

It's a very familiar tale: Peter Pan, captain of the Lost Boys, goes to find a Mother for the gang. He picks Wendy because she knows the endings to some of his favorite stories. She insists on bringing her brothers along, although they already have plenty of boys. They all go off to Neverland to battle Indians, alligators, and even Captain Hook and his pirates.

The Seacoast Repertory Theatre chose this magical show to grace their holiday slot, and filled it with a cast full of zestful performers. It's an over-the-top show, which director Brian Swasey makes sure takes a strictly over-the-top approach, giving us a huge, live storybook on stage. Every aspect is enchanting.

The Darlings are a typical well-to-do 19th century English family, if a bit befuddled. The elegant Debra Wiley and the dapper Brett Mallard play the parents, and their singing voices are lovely and rich. Curran Russell shows us Michael as a peppy young man, and Scott Hermenau throws himself delightfully into the role of the younger, sometimes unruly, John.

Kari Buckley's Wendy is endearingly maternal, but sparkingly girlish at the same time. Her strong vocals and charming performance, coupled with her exquisite appearance, combine to make a perfect Wendy, close to something any of us would have imagined while reading the story.

Among the Lost Boys, Lauren Hill stands out with her impish yet angelic performance, and Andrew Bridges is her equal in his devilish appeal. Of the Indians, Brett Wufson and Jennifer Sue Mallard don't miss a graceful step. Wendy O'Byrne is also a lovely dancer, but as Tiger Lily, her vocals are completely lost when matched against the mighty Peter Pan's.

As Smee, Hook's right hand man, Chris Bradley brings his supernova personality to the stage, enveloping this entire audience his bright comic glow. Jennifer Battye, as Jane, Wendy's daughter who goes off with Pan at the end, is cherubic and adorable, and flew like a true trouper.

The dastardly Captain Hook is also played by Brett Mallard, whose portrayal is daunting but never intimidating. While strong and hardy, Hook also seems a little less thundering and vigorous than all the forces surrounding him.

Finally, Kimber Lynn Drake's Pan belies her diminutive size. Within seconds of stepping onstage, her firecracker personality fills the theater and pulls us in. Her exacting performance, as well as her mighty vocal skills, hold us captive throughout all three acts. She's nothing less than enthralling.

Michael Minahan employs a set design that can be pulled apart and reconstructed as something entirely different within minutes; it's clever and efficient. Aaron Hutto's lighting design served the story perfectly (including the bright little ball of light, the fairy Tink).