

A GENTLE GUIDE TO DES MOINES THEATRE

LOST GIRL

Sept. 14, 2019



Des Moines Young Artists' Theatre presents *Lost Girl*, opening next Friday, September 20 at the Franklin Jr. High building.

Their first show of the season, *Lost Girl* is essentially a sequel to the classic Peter Pan story, set six years after Wendy returns to the nursery and her home.

But the setting, and the story told, are very different from J.M. Barrie's original tale. Written by Kimberly Belflower, this new work is all about moving on, growing up, and becoming more than just a part of someone else's story.

SECOND STORY TO THE RIGHT

Director David A. VanCleave was delighted to discover the script for *Lost Girl*, and he's proud to have DMYAT be one of the first groups in the country to put it onstage. While a comparison with the original Peter Pan is inevitable, where the story goes from there with Wendy and her own journey is the exciting part.

"*Peter Pan* is all about childhood...refusing to grow up. While Barrie acknowledges the darkness (the original novel says that when lost boys start to show signs of growing up, he 'thins them out'), it is never consuming; there's always more play and another adventure. It's why we [as a society] love Peter Pan / Neverland so much," VanCleave explains.

"But unfortunately, we do grow up. And sometimes that darkness can be consuming... like the end of a relationship or your parents' divorce. Navigating that darkness is tricky for anyone, especially someone who has never experienced it. Do you--can you--forget completely? How do you celebrate and cherish the happy memories that are filled with love without crashing back to reality filled with loss?"

Yvette Hermann is back working on another DMYAT production, and with *Lost Girl* she and her performers get to explore a whole new spin on Peter Pan... but was it really about him to begin with?

"It's Wendy's story," says Hermann. "It always has been. She starts *Lost*, but this journey is hers, hers alone, and she traverses uncharted territory, scarier than Neverland: the landscape of her experiences is a series of obstacles to identity (re)formation. We (historically) glorify images of masculinity that serve men... the Disney Corporation romanticized Wendy's story so much that we think it's the Peter Pan story. The journey is Wendy's. Peter has no arc. He never grows up and that's part of his 'magic.' Most people don't give a thought to what happens to the Darlings after he disappears."



"For me, this play is a psychological journey of Trauma and Healing. Wendy's. She falters, she clings, she repels, she doesn't understand her own thoughts and emotions... and by the end of the play she enters the final stages of recovery: remembrance, mourning and self-affirmation. And it's poetry. The entire play is written in verse, which is not new or modern, but so, so beautiful."

REVISITING THE PAST

Jill S. Ziegler is no stranger to local audiences, having performed with many groups in the area including the DM Playhouse, Noce, Kata Klysmic, and many others. In *Lost Girl* she plays Mother to Wendy, and oddly enough it's somewhat similar to something Ziegler done in the past, but with a new spin.

"My experience in the role of Mother in *Lost Girl* is particularly special to me since I played Mrs. Darling (and Grown Up Wendy) in *Peter Pan* several years ago. I spent a lot of time then digging into who Mrs. Darling was, so getting to reprise the role within this new story with a totally new concept is really exciting. I've been able to pull from that experience along with the original J.M. Barrie text to give an interesting story to this new role – even though both parts are relatively 'small' in the grand scheme of both shows. In this new extension to the story, Mr. Darling is no longer around, which connects Mother to Wendy in a far deeper and more relatable way. The fact that we've both been abandoned has really informed my scenes with Wendy and has evolved the mother/daughter relationship audiences might think they know."

CHOREOLLABORATORS

You may wonder what that word means. It's a term listed in the program for *Lost Girl* and officially the credit that Yvette Hermann earns for this production.



"A 'choreollaborator' is a portmanteau of choreographer and collaborator," she explains. "David and I think we invented it when we worked on *RENT* for DMYAT in summer of 2016. David and I like to take a collaborator approach. We often work with first-time actors and directors, and putting the decision-making in their hands invariably produces a more heartfelt performance. I'd rather not have young actors follow my directions- I want them to solve the problems and create the beauty- I'm there to make sure their movement choices are safe and support the story."

"My approach is informed by Sanford Meisner (naturalistic acting technique based on listening), Jerzy Grotowski (theatre using things on hand) and Rudolf Laban (movement and energy)... we infuse the concepts and vocabulary early in the rehearsal process and the ensemble runs with it. Soon they are confidently and joyously suggesting safe ways to lift one another (literally) or finding their own shades of meaning in the dialogue."

VanCleave has used this concept in his entire approach to this show. "We've had several movement rehearsals where the actors use their bodies to explore different themes (like being 'stuck' vs 'free'), or they will articulate what a scene really means or what Wendy is actually feeling and stage that analysis rather than the words coming out of their mouths. It's a powerful process of exploration. Sometimes their explorations stay in the show, sometimes they inform the finished "blocking" that the audience will see, and sometimes the audience will see it exactly as is."

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Lost Girl opens next Friday at the Franklin Jr. High Auditorium and runs through Sept. 29.

**Seize
the
Play!**