

Encore

Families won't regret getting 'Fool'ish at TAM

David A. Sargent / Special to the Sun Journal

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'The Fool of the World
and the Flying Ship'
has something for all

MONMOUTH -- There's no better place for a family theatre experience in the next few weeks than Cumston Hall where actors of Theater at Monmouth are spinning masterful magic in "The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship."

This show is a delight for children of kindergarten age and right on up to parents and grandparents. There's non-stop action and rollicking humor. It's all presented with an enthusiastic theatrical flair that obviously delights the actors as much as the audience.

"The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship" is another adaptation by Dawn McAndrews, TAM's producing artistic director, of a fairy tale from collections by Andrew Lang in the late 1800s. Last year's family-oriented trio of stories, "Tales from the Blue Fairy Book" was a hit, and this one from the Yellow Fairy Book is an excellent follow-up.

The cast of five brings a total of 13 characters to life, and the players often accomplish this in lightning-like succession.

It's a classic Russian fairy tale that encourages the power of believing in yourself, the value of friendship, and the importance of following your dreams.

Few people had faith in Dimitri, who was thought of as the biggest fool in the world, but Dimitri is determined to prove everyone wrong. When the Tsar declares he will give his daughter in marriage to the man who brings him a flying ship, the Fool sets off on an adventure to change his life.

Ian Carlsen, who directs this show, said he believes the best thing about adapting fairy tales for a modern audience is "wrestling with their lopsidedness." Carlsen, who is making his directing debut at TAM, said this re-telling shows that the secret to the Fool's success is not in possessing incredible skill or power. Instead, his success comes from facing each event with an open mind, an open heart, and surrounding himself with people who believe in him."

Andy Blaustein, in his first season with TAM, plays the Fool. Dimitri is bumbling, clumsy and a bit dopey, but he has a charming kindheartedness.

Leighton Samuels, second season, plays four parts including the stately

chamberlain to the Tsar; Sergei, a member of the court; and the Hopper Woodsman.

Michael Dix Thomas, second season, takes on four roles. He's a phenomenal archer, a strawman, the Tsar and Boris.

Erica Murphy, a 12-year TAM veteran, plays Sophia, the Tsar's daughter. She's also the narrator who helps audience members, young and old, keep track of the fast-paced developments.

Olivia Williamson, in her first season in the TAM stage, portrays Dimitri's mother. She's also the Listener and the Glutton, who are two of the super-heroes who accompany the Fool on his flying ship adventure.

There's some extremely-important audience participation in the play. When the time comes, it's easy to see that the multi-generational audience is fully engaged and wholeheartedly on the Fool's side.

Michelle Handley has provided some imaginative costuming for this production. The simple but highly-effective set is designed by Stacey Koloski, lighting is by J.M. Pratt, and sound is by Rew Tippin.

"The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship" was made into a stop-motion animated television film in the United Kingdom in 1991. A book-on-tape version was released in 1991 featuring Robin Williams, and portions of the tale are also featured in Terry Gilliam's 1988 film, "The Adventures of Baron Munchausen."

Additional performance dates for "The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship" are at 1 p.m. on July 25 and Aug. 4, 8, 11, 15 and 20. Running time is 50 minutes. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for children. Discounts available for groups of 10 or more. For calendar and reservations, contact the TAM Box Office at 207-933-9999 or visit www.theateratmonmouth.org.