

A towering tale - Jack's story still magic after all these years

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Jack and the Giant Friday through Feb. 4 Creative Arts Theatre & School 1100 W. Randol Mill Road \$7 (817) 861-2287 or (817) 265-8512

An acting giant is headed for a fall, and we're not talking about Robert Downey Jr.

Matt Zeske portrays the towering antagonist in Creative Arts Theatre & School's musical rendition of Jack and the Giant, making its debut this weekend. Most everyone knows that the giant gets waylaid at the tail end of the tale.

The familiar fable describes a family so poor it must sell a beloved cow to survive. Jack is entrusted to take the cow to market, but he meets a stranger and trades bovine for beans.

In Jack's defense, the beans are not Ranch Style. These are genuine magic beans.

Still, his mother (Jennifer Jeffries) gets mad and throws them to the ground. Jack wakes the next day to find that a beanstalk has sprouted, leading up to the giant's pad. Inside, an abducted queen (Kelsi Morris) waits to be rescued.

Director Joe Chapa's first choice to portray the giant was 14-year-old Joey Geisel. But Geisel is one of the theater troupe's premier vocalists, and the role of Jack required strong vocals.

"Jack really has to have a good singing voice," Chapa says. "He has a couple of really beautiful ballads."

So, Chapa pegged Geisel as Jack, and named Zeske, 17, as the giant.

Zeske, at 5 feet 10 inches, is hardly a towering figure. He becomes a giant with the help of stilts hidden beneath his costume.

Zeske had never donned stilts until his first rehearsal early this month. He cautiously veered around the stage, staring at the floor, occasionally losing his balance and even falling once.

"It's scary," he says of that first day. "It's a challenge. I've been looking at my feet the whole time and I can't do that during the performance."

But Zeske was soon accomplished enough to dance while wearing the elongated peg legs.

Other cast members include twins Caitlin and Graham Galloway as a cow, Christian Genco as a troll and Collin Wassell as High Sheriff Dum Dum.

The play is geared for children, despite a story line that involves kidnapping and a showdown between a boy and a giant.

"It's upbeat and not anything scary for the younger kids," Chapa says. "Besides, how scary is a story that involves a dancing cow?"

Showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Fridays; 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays; 2:30 p.m. Sundays through Feb.4.

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