

## Production captures book's mood

Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TX) - April 2, 2000

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- Edition: FINAL
- Section: NEWS
- Page: 9

Roald Dahl's bizarre children's books Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and James and the Giant Peach are wonderful odes to the power of imagination. Both have deeper messages buried within and, especially with Charlie, a slightly gloomy tone underscoring a whimsical narrative.

The film version of Charlie, renamed Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory, shows this nicely, while the 1996 movie of James and the Giant Peach doesn't, and ends up being enjoyable but not completely satisfying.

Richard R. George's dramatization of James and the Giant Peach does, however, live up to the original; but it's not an easy one to pull off onstage. Creative Arts Theatre & School's production succeeds thanks to an energetic cast and inventive artistic values. Under Margaret Crawford's direction, the show is thoroughly entertaining. If she worked out a few timing issues where the show lulls, she'd have an A-plus production on her hands.

The play starts off a little show, but finds its magic, appropriately enough, when James (Christian Genco) enters the gargantuan peach that has been growing on the hitherto fruitless tree in his wicked Aunt Sponge (Terry Day) and Aunt Spiker's (Kelsie Morris) yard.

Inside, he encounters a grasshopper (Scott Rickels), a spider (Ciara Gay), a centipede (Sean Henry), a ladybug (Jackie Holt), an earthworm (Madeleine Rady), a glow worm (Julie Wood) and a silkworm (Charli Habingreither).

Jeania Phillips' colorful costume design deserves much of the credit for this show's success. Save for the earthworm, all of these creatures have additional limbs attached (giving the insects six total, the spider eight, the centipede, well, 10). The spider costume is particularly a marvel, and is navigated gracefully by 15-year-old Gay, whose training in ballet is apparent (the six legs that touch the ground - including the actress' real ones - are en pointe the entire time).

Many of the other creatures - butterflies, seagulls, sharks, cloud men, a rhinoceros - are puppets and manipulated skillfully by the youths.

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James and the Giant Peach runs through Sunday at Creative Arts Theatre & School, 1100 W. Randol Mill Road in Arlington. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Friday; 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sundays. Show runs one hour, 50 minutes with one intermission. Tickets are \$7; \$5.75 for groups of 10 or more. Call 861-2287 (CATS).

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- Index terms: THEATER REVIEW
- Record: 1019833
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