

'Wizard's Gift' casts a happy spell

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By CAROLE BEERS

"The Wizard's Gift," a musical, magical mystery tour-de-force written by University of Washington student R. Allen Paris, is in its premiere production at Woodland Park's Poncho Theater this week and next.

There are so many good things about this production that one hardly knows where to start. It is primarily a children's show, but has enough pizzazz and good music to entertain persons of any age.

Thank R. Allen Paris for a delightful kooky plot: some Sesame-like characters called "Fuzzies" try to retrieve a holiday tree (the Tree of Wisdom) from a wicked wizard (Nogol, Prince of the Otherworld). They enlist the aid of a good wizard (Prince of Truth) and assorted well-meaning dwarfs and elves.

Their efforts take them through an enchanted forest to an eerie cave—thank Sean Young for these simple yet gorgeous sets.

—right up to the spectacular battle of the wizards—wails aking beautifully with music by Jonathan Field, David Kiesel and Gary Lanz. A combo featuring piano, flute, violin and clarinet create the musical mood, while admirable singing and dancing is done by the Seattle Youth Theater cast.

Most notable among the performers are Heles McNab, who sings with an operatic-quality voice; Earl Smith, who creates a terrifying evil wizard in a purple satin cape; Robert Ferguson, as a humbling Fuzzy; and David Kiesel, as Callanon, the good wizard.

Dance sequences have been imaginatively choreographed by Mary Hoagland and Mark Morris, both of the Koloda Dance Ensemble.

Morris, a 15-year-old sophomore at Franklin High School, dances stunningly as Top Elf, showing his extensive dance training.

Add the zany colorful costumes by Ms. Hoagland and Vickie Vanecek, and you have quite a show. Their Fuzzies looked like walking Easter eggs wearing fright wigs for hair.

ASIDE FROM the production aspects, the best thing about the show is that it does not talk down to children. It is sophisticated entertainment, and the young cast has a great time seeming to take their characters

seriously. Humming is held to a minimum, when it could be overdone.

"The Wizard's Gift," directed by Joan Guistason, will play at 11 a. m. and 2 p. m. tomorrow through Thursday, and at the same times December 27 through 31 at Poncho Theater.

The production is co-sponsored by the Y. W. C. A. and the Seattle Parks and Recreation Department.

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