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MSU cast will take to the air in 'Peter Pan'

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Written by **Bridgette Redman** For the Lansing State Journal

It's hard to say what is more magical for kids about Peter Pan. Is it the idea of never growing up? Or is it the chance to fly?

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Things To Do

While the Michigan State University theater department can't offer eternal youth to its audiences, it is giving some of them the chance to fly during its production of "Peter Pan."

The musical, directed by Rob Roznowski, has brought in harnesses to let the actors fly as they portray Peter Pan, Wendy, her brothers, and the boys from Never-Never Land. It's a classic musical in which the MSU theater folks have added their own twists.

On April 19, they'll have their "Kids Fly Free Day." The Department of Theatre has partnered with the 4th Wall Theatre Company and the Michigan Autism Alliance to select 17 special needs students who will get the chance to fly in the harnesses before the show begins. The program, funded by a grant from Jackson National Life, begins at 10:30 a.m. They'll experience flying and then get to stay to watch the show.

The show itself has a new setting that Roznowski and the department selected as a response to some of the controversy that

typically surrounds the show.

"Peter Pan is a beloved musical that now courts controversy for its depictions of 'Indians' in the show. These 'Indians' are usually portrayed as stereotypical Native Americans who 'smokum peace pipe' and are referred to as 'redskins.' This representation advances regressive cultural stereotypes to the young audiences usually courted to view Peter Pan."

The MSU version changes this by setting the whole story in colonial India and the Indians in Neverland are actually Indian.



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The concept not only involves traditional costuming from India of that period, but it also involves the MSU Bhandra Dance Team. They'll be portraying the Indians in this production. Roznowski has worked with them to incorporate their routines throughout the show. They will perform traditional Bhangra dancing and use other Indian theatrical techniques for the show.

Hot on the heels of Cirque du Soleil performing at the Breslin Center, this production of Peter Pan also will feature high flying acrobatics, something MSU reports as a first for the Pasant Theatre at Wharton Center.

• **“Peter Pan,” MSU Theatre, Pasant Theatre, Wharton Center, MSU,**

8 p.m. today, 2 p.m. and

8 p.m Saturday and

2 p.m. Sunday, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 8 p.m. April 18,

2 p.m. and 8 p.m. April 19, 2 p.m. April 20. Tickets \$10 at www.whartoncenter.com or (800) WHARTON.

Act II: Renegade

expands to April

The Renegade Festival is stretching out of its August time slot.

The end-of-summer festival which features all sorts of theater from around Michigan has created a new series that helps feature the work of local playwrights. The new series is titled “Renegade Readings,” and is meant to lead up to the festival which runs

Aug. 14-16 this year.

Its first event will be “Shop Talk,” a work led by playwright Bill Helder. It will feature four short plays by local playwrights that all center around the theme of a “shop.” The four plays are:

- “The Beauty Shop” by Roger Rochowiak
- “The Coffee Shop” by Jane Zussman
- “The Flower Shop” by Eileen O’Leary
- “The Costume Shop” by Helder

The four shows are being directed by Bob Robinson with a cast that includes Ken Beachler, Sue Chmurynsky, Katie Dufort, Chanae Houska, Diana Lett, Jeff Magnuson and Amy Rickett.

A second event in the series is being planned for mid-June and will feature spoken word artists including Suban Nur Cooley and Janet Colson.

All are taking place in Old Town at the Absolute Gallery, one of the locations used during the Renegade Festival.

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MSU's Rock painted for Lacey Holsworth

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