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# 'Peter, Wolf' will enchant little ones

Chris Curcio

Special for The Republic  
Feb. 6, 2007 12:00 AM

A large crowd greeted Childsplay's creative new production of *Peter and the Wolf* with well-justified cheers at Saturday's initial public performance. Directed with theatrical vision and style by Gary Minyard, *Peter and the Wolf* springs from Sergei Prokofiev's popular classic orchestral interpretation. It lifts some of Prokofiev's clever compositions, including his sharp instrumental definitions of each character, and adds Allison Gregory's clever adaptation and some new musical songs by Hummie Mann.

The show never veers far from the original tale, though. It reminds young children of the struggle between man and animal, the importance of friends and using courage when challenges arise. Man and various animals cohabitate around Peter's grandfather's house, which is adjacent to a large meadow, a pond and a dense forest.

The story tells of Peter's friends, Cat, Duck and Bird, and how an amiable but intense hunter wants to stifle a pesky Wolf who bothers the group. Peter thinks of placing the Wolf in a local zoo so he will be away from the animals he haunts with his sly sophistication.

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The tale is told with puppets and with actors who portray the fanciful animals with shimmering appeal. Jon Gentry gives a stellar, slimy performance as the villainous Wolf.

Part of the credit goes to Childsplay, which has the corner on using creativity to present classic stories. Minyard's joyous production gets its dazzle from Connie Furr-Solomon's cute

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### Childsplay: 'Peter and the Wolf'

Reviewed Saturday at the Tempe Performing Arts Center, 132 E. Sixth St. Continues through March 11. \$18-\$22. (480) 350-8119.



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puppets and character-inspired costumes, Jeff Lemire's colorful sets, Michael J. Eddy's bright but carefully focused lighting and Gina Handy's simple but interesting choreography.

The acting ensemble creates engaging character studies of the familiar players. Michael Sample is a charming Peter, Jenn Taber is a daffy but shrewd Bird, Jessica Blaszak is a conniving Cat, and Michael Arbuckle is a cute, pesky duck and is focused as the shoot-happy Huntsman.

If you have little ones who haven't been to a live performance, you couldn't select any better message-driven play than Childsplay's delightfully wily *Peter and the Wolf*.

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