

Actors consider stories without heroes

By *STACY TREVENON*

Half Moon Bay Review

What if the heroes of well-loved children's stories were yanked out of their tales - what kind of heroics would put them back?

That's the essence of "Vanishing Heroes in 3-D," the 12th original play created by the Young Actors Workshop. The answers will be revealed with customary YAW spontaneity in shows this weekend.

Like every original YAW play, it was conceived and developed by YAW students from kindergarten through high school with "guided improvisation," cheered on by YAW director Auri Naggar.

But this one gets the audience involved on a new level: watching action unfold through 3-D glasses, which they'll get at the door.

"It's a big thing that's different this year: a play in 3-D," Naggar said. "The concept started as silliness, when one of the kids said, 'Wouldn't it be cool if we gave the audience 3-D glasses?'"

Following YAW tradition, the older students took that idea and began building a story. Younger classes developed their own plotlines and, with encouragement by Naggar ("it's a joint effort," he said), fit them in. All classes wrote the plays' songs.

The story taps into beloved kids' tales: An evil librarian (Morganna Bowman) plots to do away with happy endings by pulling heroes out of their stories with help from henchmen and 3-D glasses.

Chaos reigns: When Peter Pan (Emma Zilber) is pulled from his story, Wendy drowns and the Lost Boys become pirates. When Frodo (Kevin McMahon-Kingshill) is pulled out of "The Lord of the Rings," the Dark Lord triumphs and Frodo winds up in a mall. When Hermione Granger (Raina Woudenberg) is cut out of the "Harry Potter" books and Sleeping Beauty (Hanna Nolan) gets yanked from her story, they become disoriented.

Then, teacher Miss Johnson and her class pull the Beaudelaires out of Lemony Snicket's "A Series of Unfortunate Events" to fight back.

Stories like these resist time, said Naggar. "Kids love story. Stories are everywhere," he said. "We make sense of the world through story. They discover what happens when characters are pulled out of their stories."

YAW students also discovered how it was to play them.

"It's really interesting being a person so many people around the world are fans of," said Woudenberg.

Others found creating the play to be daunting. "It's strange because we had to bring all the elements together into a single play," said "Henchman" James Murray.

"Vanishing Heroes" runs Friday through Sunday at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 13 and Saturday, May 14, and 2 p.m. Sunday, May 15, in the Half Moon Bay High School auditorium. Tickets are \$5 at the door. Call 726-1304.