

Children's Theatre brings back popular 'Lion'

By Paul Hyde

Arts Writer

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With "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," South Carolina Children's Theatre is bringing back an audience favorite.

"It's a hugely popular show," says Betsy Bisson, director of the production.

The adaptation of C.S. Lewis' classic novel, last performed in 2003, opens Friday at the Peace Center's Gunter Theatre for nine performances through Feb. 12.

"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," the most popular of Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia" series, follows four children as they journey to the magical land of Narnia and battle an evil witch and her army.

"It's a story we all know and love," says Debbie Bell, executive director of the Children's Theatre. "We've always looked forward to being able to do it



Eric Lane and Debra Capps appear in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," opening Friday.

STAFF/OWEN RILEY JR.

again."

The play is a Christian allegory of love, faith and courage. Its cast of 32 includes 22 students.

The enduring popularity of Lewis' much-beloved "Lion" fuels interest in a stage adaptation.

"Those who've read the book enjoy seeing it come to life on stage," says Bisson, the artistic

and education director for the Children's Theatre.

She says "Lion" should appeal particularly to boys.

"It has so much combat in it," says Bisson, who directed the show in 2003 and at Flat Rock Playhouse in 2001. "There's a huge battle, which tends to appeal to boys."

The on-stage battles also test a director's mettle, Bisson says.

"The combat sequence is always treacherous," Bisson says. "It takes a solid week of rehearsal."

"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" will feature 15-year-old, 6-foot-5 Rusty Hawes as Aslan, the lion. Prominent local actress Debra Capps, meanwhile, will make her Children's Theatre debut as the witch.

For Bisson, directing "Lion" offers an opportunity to revisit a novel she first read at age 10.

"It was a book that I absolutely loved growing up," she says.

YOU CAN GO

What: "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," produced by the South Carolina Children's Theatre

When: 7 p.m. on Friday; also 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. on Saturday; 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 5; 7 p.m. on Feb. 10; 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 11; and 1:30 p.m. on Feb. 12

Where: Peace Center's Gunter Theatre

Tickets: \$26 for adults and \$17 for children 18 years and under; a special \$14 price is offered on Feb. 5 at 5:30 p.m.

Information: 864-298-4004 or www.peace-center.org