

Puppets & Pandas in the Park

Written by Lisa Annelouise Rentz
Tuesday, 29 April 2008 07:39

On Saturday, May 10th at 5:30 in Waterfront Park, will present their musical adaptation of the original Cinderella story, which originated in the 9th Century T'ang Dynasty. A free puppet workshop is also offered, right before the performance, at 3:30pm-- Girl Scouts who need a Puppetry Badge, here's your chance!



“Yeh-Shen: The Girl Covered in Ashes” is the Oldest Cinderella Story, told for over a thousand years. Over 700 versions of the story are found around the world from Egypt to Viet Nam. As a story, a play, an operetta, or a ballet, some version of the Cinderella story is known by practically every child in the world, and every culture has contributed to the magic.

Bits ‘N Pieces Puppet Theatre continues the ancient tradition of contributing to this story by casting a panda as the main character, and by using giant body puppets to perform in the style of the American Broadway Musical. This type of musical theater tells its story directly to the audience. Through the theatrical retelling of classic children’s stories, each with its own unique life lesson and moral, Bits ‘N Pieces brings to life the magical wonderment of children’s fantasy, and reinforces the core values long told and emphasized by great storytellers. Utilizing the talented resources of multidisciplinary professionals in theatre arts and education, their musical productions are adapted and specifically developed to complement elementary school curriculums. While in Beaufort, Bits ‘N Pieces will also work with students at Whale Branch Elementary School.

Bits ‘N Pieces Puppet Theatre was founded in 1973 in a Tampa, Florida studio by Executive Director Jerry Bickel. He was joined by Artistic Director Holli Rubin in 1976. Their repertoire includes Gaspar the Florida Pirate, Thumbelina, Phantom of the Opera, and Rip Van Winkle. Bits ‘N Pieces has come up with an exciting production for Beaufort families, Cinderella buffs, and fans of 9-foot tall puppets: here’s a summary of “Cinderella and the Chinese Slipper” as told by Bits ‘N Pieces Executive Director Jerry Bickel, based on the original story from the 9th Century Tang Dynasty:

Pandarella, our heroine, lived with her Mommy Bearest and sister Picki-Picki in a green bamboo forest. Pandarella often walked along the river bank to visit her one true friend, Fansea Fish. One day Mommy Bearest came asking Pandarella to run and get her sister a new dress for the New Year’s Eve Celebration. Always the obedient daughter, Pandarella helped her sister get dressed to meet the King. Word on the grapevine was Young King Sing would meet a girl this very night! Time was short, with Pandarella away, Mommy caught Fansea Fish and served him up for dinner! Pandarella cried tears when she found out Fansea Fish was gone. Then Pandarella laughed with joy as she watched her best friend return as magic fish bones! Fansea fish said Pandarella would go to the Ball! He dressed her in a kimono as blue as the water. He covered her feet with golden fish scale slippers. Pandarella promised to be home by the stroke of the Gong. Then Fansea Fish was gone! Young King Sing hoped to meet the girl of his dreams. Though the entire animal kingdom was there, no girl would do until the King met the panda with the tiny golden shoes. They sang together, danced together, laughed together too until the stroke of the New Years Gong! Surprised by the sound, Pandarella jumped and ran away. She tripped and fell and lost one golden slipper. Pip Squeak the Baby Dragon found it and suggested King Sing could search for the girl who could fit the tiny slipper. Amidst the panda-monium, the New Year Baby Dragon accompanies the king on his search for the girl

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whose foot fits the golden shoe.