

Follow the Leader to El Dorado's "Peter and the Starcatcher"!
written by Annabelle Shumaker, a senior at Mission Viejo High School

El Dorado's 'Peter and the Starcatcher' is an extraordinary story about an orphan boy and his voyage to become the fabled Peter Pan. This tale of self-discovery is a comically sincere production, showing the greatest treasure in life is not gold, but the friendships we make along the way.

Tobin Cooke brings to life Boy; a broken orphan with a heart guarded by the fear of abandonment. Cooke's wide, curious eyes glance about with an initially stumbling speech, his posture the awkward slouch of a boy not yet grown. His transformation is evident as he kindles his relationship with Avery Henkenius' Molly. Henkenius portrays the stubborn girl with an upright posture and factual tone, easing into a tender lull as she grows fonder of Boy. The pair together make an inimitable team, their connection displayed in stolen kisses and playful challenges.

Prancing onto the scene with a devious air, Owen Switzer makes his appearance as Black Stache – a pompous pirate with greed for gold. Switzer frolics with large, cartoon-like movements to compliment his over-the-top personality. This is contrasted with sharp facial expressions that change on a whim, going from basking in his wickedness to scowling, his knife at the throat of another.

The whimsy of this production was enhanced through props by JD Cavalluzzi, Avery Gaiennie-Lovell, and Evan Morikawa. The clever usage of simple everyday things vitalized the imaginative feel of the show. Umbrellas are covered in leaves and vines to recreate a jungle scenery, fabrics flow about the stage to mimic the sea, and ropes are methodically manipulated to create the borders of a room; these are all ingenious methods of using props to bring the show to life.

Costuming achieved by Avery Henkenius, Link Montgomery, and Dee Tran is the perfect touch to further pull the audience in. The simple base costume for each character was carefully designed to be able to add minor accessories to each individual to signify each character, such as the use of trash used for mermaid accessories or the transfer of the captain's jacket from Lord Aster to Black Stache. In particular, the multi-use of Teacher's dress as both her mermaid tail and the Lagoon with long, beautiful fabrics wrapping the stage was executed exquisitely.

El Dorado's production of Peter and the Starcatcher is a legendary performance full of stars!