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Delightful, poignant "The Giant's Garden" is huge hit for Kincardine Theatre Guild

By: **Liz Dadson**
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The Kincardine Theatre Guild's production of "The Giant's Garden - A Musical of Epic Proportion," is delightful, poignant and a definite hit with audiences.

The play opened Thursday evening at the Kincardine Arts Centre and from the amazing opening scene, right to the very last note, it is a wonderful, magical, emotional, magnificent show.

Jason Geberdt is tremendous as the Giant; in fact, if you did not read it in the program, you wouldn't even recognize him as the same Geberdt who played the mild-mannered butler in last fall's "Joseph and the Technicolour Dreamcoat."

Newcomer Erin Milley-Patey as Summer is a strong counterpart to veteran guild actor, Jaki Mayer-Duggan, who plays the frosty Winter. Equally as vibrant in their roles, are Kathryn Low as Bird, and Jared Petrie as Flower.

Joining them on stage for the first time, are youth actors Aarelyn Wade and Lydia Ritchie as Constance, and Charlie Hall Elwood and Evan Graham as Oscar.

Aarelyn and Charlie performed during dress rehearsal Sunday, Nov. 12, and opening night Thursday, while Lydia and Evan performed Friday night during the Gala evening. Both are good in the roles, if a bit soft-spoken during the singing portions.

The jam-packed stage of children and adults performs beautifully together, moving comfortably on and off stage as required, with the Minstrel (Dylan Trahan) moving pieces of the set where they need to be at any given moment. And the costumes are phenomenal, with praise to Holly McAdam and her team for such an amazing job.

The play tells the tale of the Giant's Garden, a place forbidden to outsiders, in the Deep Dark Forest, hidden beyond The Stream of Sorrows and Sinking Spirits. When the Giant goes away, the children sneak in to play and for seven years, their idyllic world is undisturbed, until the Giant returns. It's a story of bravery, the importance of friendship, and the power of love.

It is a heartwarming story but it doesn't feel that way in Act 2 as Winter continues to control the garden with her freezing cold and snow, and has locked up the Giant.

One of the most hilarious scenes has the Giant pretending to be a damsel in distress, with a mop on his head, trying to get Oscar's help to let him out. Then Oscar tells him the sad tale about losing his grandmother and how all of his memories of her are in the red bag that he carries with him.

So, will the Giant be released? Will Winter take over the garden and keep Summer out? Will Bird and Flower and the children never return to the garden?

You'll have to get a ticket to find out. It does have a powerful ending which drew a standing ovation Friday night. Congratulations to director Shirley Bieman and producer Margaret Visser for a fantastic show.

"The Giant's Garden" continues Nov. 23-24, 30 and Dec. 1, at 7:30 p.m.; and Nov. 25-26 and Dec. 2, at 2 p.m., at the Kincardine Arts Centre. Tickets are \$25 each for adults, and \$20 each for youth aged 16 and under; available at J'Adorn in downtown Kincardine or by calling the Box Office at 519-396-9000.

Gala night, Friday, saw the added bonus of a visit by the playwrights, Peter Fenton and Scott White, of Toronto who were thrilled with the production of their play in Kincardine.

"It's a really big production which makes it great for community theatre," said White. "But it's quite a challenging show."

He and Fenton particularly enjoyed watching the dancing trees in the background while Oscar and Constance were singing after being sent away from the Giant's garden.

"We love the range of ages on stage, and that the youth are in the leading roles, while the grown-ups are playing the part of dancing trees," said White. "There's something magical about that."

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