

Hobbit flies — without special FX

THE HOBBIT

Waterfront Theatre,
next to Kids' Market
on Granville Island to May 3
Tickets \$13 – \$26 at
www.ticketmaster.ca or 604-685-6217

BY PETER BIRNIE
VANCOUVER SUN

REVIEW | Rather than gild the lily, Carousel Theatre goes back to basics for its new production of *The Hobbit*. Banished from Middle Earth are the computer-generated imagery and holographic wizardry of big-budget feature films or video games; director Jack Paterson instead relies on the simple things that live theatre does best to carry this little epic along.

Kim Selody's adaptation of the J.R.R. Tolkien story, wherein lie the roots of the great *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, is nicely streamlined by Paterson so that Bilbo Baggins fairly flies along with a band of dwarves. Paterson cleverly helps highlight such special moments as the meeting of Baggins and Gollum, revealing to young audiences the origins of all the trouble to come much later when a certain magic ring reaches Elijah Wood and Sean Astin (sorry, Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee) in the megamovies.

Kristian Ayre makes an excellent Bilbo, with a fine sense of both the Tookish part that sends Bilbo out the door in search of adventure and the Baggins side that soon has him longing for

See **ARTISTIC EFFECT** C6

Artistic effect from bold lighting

From C1

bacon and eggs back home in his hobbit hole. Tamara McCarthy performs a superb study of hideous Gollum, reminding us, with her frog-voiced gurgles of "gollum, gollum," that the creature once named Smeagol is now known only by the awful croaking it makes.

Stefano Giulianetti is suitably gruff as chief dwarf Thorin and Craig Erickson brings a charming note of humour to Gandalf the wizard, often delivering asides with a comedian's sense of timing and a twinkle in his eye. Later, when the towering dragon Smaug is seen only as a blazing pair of red eyes, it's Erickson whose voice provides the thunder for this treasure-hoarding beast.

McCarthy joins Josue Laboucane, Ashley Liu, Parnelli Parnes and Luc Roderique in performing

multiple roles, with choreographer Melissa Young and fight choreographer Nick Harrison keeping everyone in constant motion.

Al Frisk's set is a balanced piece of symbolism, as walls of rock are dominated by an enormous circular opening ringed with ancient writing, and Itai Erdal's bold lighting (punctuated by blasts of lightning) is a particularly effective example of Paterson's drive for basic artistic effectiveness in lieu of cheap gimmickry.

So, too, do the costumes and constructions of Jay Havens serve this simplicity. Eagles or spiders, elves or goblins, the inhabitants of this magic kingdom are easily understood by kids of all ages.

Make that *almost* all ages — no under-fives, please, for this pleasing treat.

Sun Theatre Critic
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PHOTO BY TIM MATHESON

Actors Stefano Giulianetti, Craig Erickson and Kristian Ayre prepare for the journey in Carousel Theatre's *The Hobbit*.