

Big ideas bring ‘The Little Prince’ to life

By HEDY WEISS Theater Critic December 15, 2013 8:47PM

The prince (Amelia Hefferon, left) plays with the fox (Kasey Foster) in “The Little Prince.” | LIZ LAUREN

‘THE LITTLE PRINCE’

Highly Recommended

When: Through Feb. 23

Where:

Lookingglass Theatre at Water Tower Water Works, 821 N. Michigan Tickets

: \$45-\$75

Info: (312) 337-0665; www.lookingglasstheatre.org

Run time: 100 minutes with no intermission

Updated: December 16, 2013 2:13AM

Since its publication in 1943, Antoine de Saint-Exupery’s self-illustrated, quasi-autobiographical novella “The Little Prince” has become one of the most widely read, translated and adapted works in the French language.

And while often considered a children’s classic, it also won praise from that most hard-core adult existentialist, Albert Camus.

Though I have long been charmed by the book’s delicate, whimsical little paintings, I can’t say its allegorical tale about an aviator stranded in the Sahara Desert — and his encounter with a preternaturally wise and otherworldly young prince — cast the sort of magic spell over me it seems to have done over countless others. It always seemed just a bit too precious.

But Lookingglass Theatre’s surpassingly lovely and imaginative new stage version of the book (by Rick Cummins and John Scoullar), produced with the Actors Gymnasium and directed by David Catlin (creator of “Lookingglass Alice”), has converted me. Not only does it clearly capture the tale of a man whose creativity was crushed in childhood only to re-emerge at a moment of great stress, but it deftly illuminates Saint-Exupery’s themes of the meaning of love, the opposing pulls of solitude and companionship, and man’s relationship to the universe itself. It does all this by way of a beguiling cast of eight and the company’s characteristic flair for mixing physical magic (Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi devised the acrobatics), visual delights (cheers for designers Courtney O’Neill, Sally Dolembro and William Kirkham) and musical charm (sound designer Rick Sims, abetted by the actors’ vocal and instrumental skills).



Ian Barford is the handsome, solitary aviator who narrates the story of his crash landing, his growing sense of mortality and his encounter with a strangely wise prince (petite, Peter Pan-like Amelia Hefferon, a recent Northwestern grad making a formidable professional debut), who has arrived from another planet. The prince recounts his journey among the stars and his rueful abandonment of Rose (the elegantly daft Louise Lamson), a flower of a girl. A wise child still full of wonder, he also keeps the aviator alive by prodding his imagination and heart.

Kasey Foster is marvelously wild and oh-so-French as the fox who craves being “tamed” by the Prince. Adeoye beguiles as both the ruler hungry for applause and a Lamp Lighter in need of rest.

Kareem Bandealy is both a sinewy snake and crazily number-crunching businessmen. Raymond Fox is the geographer who never goes off to explore. And Lauren Hirte is particularly hilarious as an inebriated planet spinner.

The Little Prince proclaims: “One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye.” Lookingglass proves it is possible to fuse the two.

Email: hweiss@suntimes.com

Twitter: [@HedyWeissCritic](https://twitter.com/HedyWeissCritic)
