

Review: The Little Prince (Lookingglass Theatre and The Actors Gymnasium)

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The Little Prince

Adapted by [Rick Cummins](#) and [John Scoullar](#)

From book by [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry](#)

Directed by [David Catlin](#)

[Lookingglass Theatre](#), 821 N. Michigan ([map](#))
thru Feb 23 | [tickets](#): \$45-\$75 | [more info](#)

Check for [half-price tickets](#)

Disappointing adaptation panders to the masses



Lookingglass Theatre i/a/w The Actors Gymnasium presents

The Little Prince

Review by [Lauren Whalen](#)

It's that time of year – the holidays – where every performance company must compete with *The Nutcracker*. It's in everyone's best interest to offer some kind of alternative. The House Theatre has its own version of *Nutcracker*, a moving portrayal of grief that's reminiscent of a 1980s fantasy film. Barrel of Monkeys has a special edition of their long-running *That's Weird, Grandma!* And this year, Lookingglass Theatre Company throws its hat into the family-friendly holiday show ring with an adaptation of [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's](#) classic *The Little Prince*. The only problem? Despite its young title character and fantastical plot, *The Little Prince* is not a children's story. And in its effort to appeal to children, Lookingglass Theatre's production loses the book's dark sentimentality in favor of pandering manipulation.

In the not too distant past, an aviator ([Ian Barford](#)) finds himself stranded in the Sahara Desert with little food, even less water and a broken plane. Soon, he finds himself drawing a sheep at the request of an enigmatic little boy ([Amelia Hefferon](#)), who comes from a tiny faraway planet with three volcanoes and a beautiful rose ([Louise Lamson](#)). As the Little Prince recalls his epic journey, the aviator finds himself recalling childhood passions and dreams – but how each of them will find home remains a mystery.



It's not that *The Little Prince* is all bad. The individual actors are quite talented, using their voices and bodies in wonderful ways while portraying roses, kings and various creatures with an ethereal beauty. (Kudos to [Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi](#) for the wonderful acrobatic/circus choreography.) [Courtney O'Neill](#)'s elaborately simple set design has a lovely cinematic quality, and [William Kirkham](#)'s lighting never goes over the top. But as a production, *The Little Prince* just doesn't come together. The Aviator and the Little Prince never really connect, which is a major issue considering theirs is the story's primary emotional relationship. Some elements – including one involving a disco ball – are grossly out of place in a production with an otherwise timeless feel. And why was it necessary for the Fox ([Kasey Foster](#)) to have a terrible French accent and a sexualized costume? Was it to keep the youngest children interested? To compel the adults? Either way, director [David Catlin](#) and playwrights [Rick Cummins](#) and [John Scoullar](#) made several questionable choices at the story's expense.

As an avid fan of both Saint-Exupery's book and of Lookingglass, I had high hopes for *The Little Prince*. I admired the company's 2010 take on *Peter Pan* – aimed at older children and adults, the spooky adaptation did justice to J.M. Barrie's chronicle of the bridge between childhood and adulthood, and what is gained and lost along the way. *The Little Prince* has similar themes, and while its title character is young and innocent, it's not a Disney story for small children. Unfortunately, Lookingglass missed the mark: so much of what makes *The Little Prince* such a beautiful story was sacrificed in the name of holiday marketability. Perhaps those who haven't read the book will feel differently, but I couldn't get past the moment late in the play, when a small child screamed at the Little Prince's fate. I repeat: no matter how sugarcoated, it is not a children's story.

Rating: ★★½

The Little Prince continues through February 23rd at [Water Tower Water Works](#), 821 N. Michigan ([map](#)), with performances [Tuesdays through Sundays](#). Tickets are \$45-\$75, and are available by phone (312-337-0665) or online through [their website](#) (check for half-price tickets at [Goldstar.com](#)). More info and complete performance schedule at [LookingglassTheatre.org](#). (Running time: 90 minutes without intermission)



Photos by [Sean Williams](#)

artists

cast

[Raymond Fox](#) (King), [Lauren Hirte](#) (Desert Rose), [Louise Lamson](#) (Rose), [Ian Barford](#) (Aviator), [Amelia Hefferon](#) (Little Prince), [Kareem Bandedaly](#) (Snake), Adeoye (Lamp Lighter), [Kasey Foster](#) (Fox)

behind the scenes

[David Catlin](#) (director), [Rick Sims](#) (sound design), [Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi](#) (acrobatic and circus choreography), [Courtney O'Neill](#) (set design), [Sally Dolemba](#) (costume design), [William Kirkham](#) (lighting design), [Maria DeFabo](#) (properties), [Lee Brasuell](#) (rigger), Tess Golden (stage manager), Kelsey Lamm (assistant stage manager), [Sean Williams](#) (photos)

13-1219

Tags: [13-1219](#), [Adeoye](#), [Amelia Hefferon](#), [Antoine de Saint-Exupéry](#), [Chicago Theater](#), [Courtney O'Neill](#), [David Catlin](#), [Ian Barford](#), [John Scoullar](#), [Kareem Bandedaly](#), [Kasey Foster](#), [Kelsey Lamm](#), [Lauren Hirte](#), [Lauren Whalen](#), [Lee Brasuell](#), [Lookingglass Theatre](#), [Louise Lamson](#), [Maria DeFabo](#), [post](#), [Raymond Fox](#), [Rick Cummins](#), [Rick Sims](#), [Sally Dolemba](#), [Sean Williams](#), [Sylvia Hernandez-DiStas](#), [Tess Golden](#), [Water Tower Water Works](#), [William Kirkham](#)

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