

Marionettes take center stage for Stageworks production

By Amy Hotz
Staff Writer

Fee, fi, fo, fum. A big friendly giant soon will come.

And he'll be looking for little children - to entertain.

Stageworks newest production, *The BFG* (which stands for Big, Friendly Giant) opens Friday with puppets, marionettes, young actors and a story of trust and being sensitive to others all hung on the plot written by Roald Dahl.

Mr. Dahl's other works, such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *James and the Giant Peach*, may have earned more attention, but *BFG* has many of the same characteristics as the other stories.

"There's always a darkness in his books. This kind of scary world that children perceive," said Gina Gambony, director of the Stageworks show.

Perception is a big part of the play. Stageworks couldn't cast Andre the Giant in its lead role, so a few tricks had to be used to make 18-year-old, 5-foot-6 Darryl Jones appear to be a giant.

"I'm not too giant," the actor said. "I guess that's just the magic of theater to be able to pull this off."

First, Ms. Gambony collected a lot of puppets and marionettes. A Polish craftsman made the lead marionette, Sophie, especially for this show.

"She looks a little bit like me, blonde hair, freckles," said Kate Bakewell, who "plays" Sophie. "It was so pretty the first time I opened the box. I was just awed."

Kate and the other cast members had to learn how to use the cross and bar that control the marionettes before they could begin practicing any acting techniques. Marionettes have more movement and more parts than regular puppets, so a lot of practice time was needed.

"The strings. I got them tangled up about 12 times before I even figured out the legs," Kate said.

When performing, the cast has to feel that they are the puppets and they have to be skilled enough to make the puppets look like they're actually interacting with each other. Because the marionettes have no facial expressions (the eyes and mouth don't move), all of the characters' emotion has to be portrayed through the puppet's hand motion.

"The kids very much put everything into it. They've worked hard and they're so creative," Ms. Gambony said.

With other giants in the story with names such as *The Blood Blotter* and *Child Chewer*, having a cast that's not all real may be good for some of the more squeamish kids. But the play was designed for the little ones.

"It has all of the 'Are you afraid of the dark' type themes," Mr. Jones said. "But the *BFG* is a funny guy. It's definitely not a kids' show without a few good fart jokes."

want to go?

What: 'The BFG.'

When: 7 p.m. Friday, 3 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday.

Where: The Scottish Rite Temple, 1415 S. 17th St.

Tickets: \$5. Group discounts.

Details: 763-2563.