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### Stage Right's Bravo group stages 'The Ever After'

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Is ever after really ever as happy as anybody expects?

BRAVO COMPANY, the performing arts school of STAGE RIGHT OF TEXAS, attempts to answer this question tonight at 7 and Saturday at 2 p.m.

It all transpires in downtown Conroe's Crighton Theatre, 234 N. Main St., home of Stage Right, and site of all its productions.

Lest you think otherwise, this is a musical comedy, "The Ever After," put on by more than 20 local children and woven together by Bravo Company executive director AMY SOWERS.

Writers are Nathan Hardwick, with music and lyrics from Bill Francoeur.

"Cinderella is one major character," Amy said. "Pre-teen ERIN GREGG, who portrays her, sings a lovely solo, with a voice to match."

Stage Right adult member MELODY MONTEZ, her young son IAN MONTEZ, who is highly experienced at age 7; and now a third family member, little brother ROBBEN MONTEZ, age 4, are featured actors.

Melody portrays an evil queen, and Robben is her malevolent cat.

Other SR siblings, the Johnsons, MAC, SALLY AND CHARLIE, appear on stage together in this one. All claim previous SR/Bravo exposure.

Additional characters in this parody of daytime television are Cinderella's semi-beautiful step sisters who are now middle aged. Television hostess Sally Lizzie Donatello-Griffin hopes to reconcile the sisters after a 20-year estrangement.

Also involved in this family production are an ill-fated prince who slowly is reverting to his former state as a frog; Jiminy Cricket (Mac Johnson), now an occupational therapist and author of "My Life as your Conscience." Some annoying audience members ask inconvenient questions. Ian Montez and Charlie Johnson portray enthusiastic pitchmen for some highly touted fairy tale products.

Music like "Beauty Impaired" and "Dainty Do- Gooder," merge it all into an occasion for family bonding at a rather petite admission fee of \$10 for adults; \$5 for children. Tickets are available by calling the Crighton Theatre box office at (936) 441-7469, or at the box office, 234 N. Main Street in Conroe, home to Stage Right, The Crighton Theatre's resident troupe, where all SR productions are mounted. Visit [www.crightontheatre.org](http://www.crightontheatre.org) or [www.stage-right.org](http://www.stage-right.org) for further info.

Those preferring more adult fare also are in luck, as classic musical "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" continues at the Owen Theatre, 225 Metcalf Street in downtown Conroe.

This one is from the CRIGHTON PLAYERS, former resident troupe at Conroe's iconic Crighton Theatre, who decided to make the newly-refurbished Owen Theatre their home a couple seasons past, but retained the name Crighton Players.

MARTY CRAIG directs a sure-footed cast, headed by KERRI EDWARDS as madam Miss Mona in this

tale based on a well-known Texas brothel about 35 miles from Houston. The career of sometimes newscaster Marvin Zindler was boosted to new heights when he campaigned to close "the chicken ranch," so called because penurious customers allegedly at times bartered chickens for other favors. Zindler, renamed Melvin P. Thorpe in the musical, clashed hugely with the fictionalized sheriff, brought to life by TRAVIS BRYANT, in what may be his best role to date. This CP asset, whether acting, singing or directing, seems totally at home with the sheriff's blustery persona. Too, he skillfully offers a somewhat plaintive solo "Good Old Girl" near the show's end.

Ms. Edwards, with evident training and experience elsewhere, appears on the Owen stage for the first time, where she displays much poise and a richly developed voice.

Oh, but you have to see Thorpe's costume, which is only a forerunner to JEFFREY L. BALDWIN'S nearly bigger than life portrayal of Zindler. He struts about the stage in silvery hairpiece, blindingly blue sunglasses, and powder blue suit, spouting pejoratives about the sheriff. By all outward signs, Thorpe-Zindler imagines that he looks grand but the audience hoots once it gets sight of the greatly turned up toes of his oversized white boots. It's a Robert Burns' moment of "seeing ourselves as others see us." Worth the admission price, all by itself.

Later I asked Jeff about his costume. His wife put it together, and he lifted the hokey boots straight from E-Bay.

SHAWNA SALAZAR, returning to the Players after a long-ago stint as Rizzo in "Grease," and more recently in "The Crucible," portrays a young woman who clearly has lost her way, just looking for day-to-day survival, although she has a son somewhere. In a stirring, but revealing phone conversation, she tells him to just "give his Christmas list to grandma."

Near the finale Shawna as "Angel" sings the moving "Hard Rock Candy Christmas" as the "chicken ranch" goes out of business, casting doubts on the future of its occupants who really, and sadly, had none anyway.

Be forewarned that there is some objectionable language, mainly from "the cussin' sheriff." At any rate, given the premise of the plot, nobody should expect "dinner on the grounds" entertainment.

There is so much more to be said about this brilliant production, but space fills up fast. Call the Owen Theatre at (936) 539-4090 to reserve for tonight or Saturday eve at 8; 2 p.m. Sunday.

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