

**Theatre Review: “Really Rosie”
By Kevin M. O’Toole**



Weston Playhouse Theatre Company began its 2017 summer season with its Young Company production of “Really Rosie,” based upon the stories and poems of children’s author Maurice Sendak, with a musical score by famed tunesmith Carole King. The enthusiastic reception by last Friday afternoon’s audience, comprised largely of youngsters with their parent or grandparent in tow, confirmed the show’s appeal to small fry.

Throughout the show, the talented ensemble of actors enlisted several audience members to become a peripheral part of the performance. Each cast member conveyed an accessible, non-threatening demeanor that never condescended to the children, many of whom were being introduced to live theatre.

The skeletal plot of “Really Rosie” takes a day in the life of Rosie, who orchestrates a make-believe movie of her growing life with her pals on Avenue P. A little solipsism goes a long way. Being the product of Maurice Sendak, who penned “Where the Wild Things Are,” all is colorful and fun, but any life lessons are muddled. For example, one of Rosie’s cohorts, Pierre, petulantly played by Gideon Chicos, doggedly repeats his mantra: “I don’t care.” The titular moral of Pierre’s musical number is to care for others but Pierre never really does, even after he is eaten by a lion (and lives!).

The production’s structure afforded each cast member an opportunity to shine. As Rosie, Allie Seibold gave the cloying title character a commanding presence with her crisp singing voice. As Rosie’s needy younger sibling, Chicken Soup, Jonathan Gomolka, reminded the audience that little brothers want their own way, too. Marissa Hecker and Paul Watt-Morse gave the wiser Kathy and bookish Johnny their personal stamp. Matthew Pitts was joyful as Alligator, a bouncy pal who seemingly was fascinated by death without really knowing what that meant. In other words, your typical kids in the neighborhood.

Megumi Nakamura and Claire E. Mercier each pulled double-duty as Rosie’s and Johnny’s mothers and then scurried back to play string bass and guitar with keyboardist Kent Baker.

Various artistic touches sprinkled in by Director Tim Fort and Assistant Director/Choreographer Felicity Stiverson ensured that the adults in the audience would leave with broad smiles. The finale, an homage to “A Chorus Line” with the entire cast twirling soup bowls like top hats as they kicked and sang in unison, was simply inspired. One cannot wait to see the members of the Young Company in Weston’s production of “The Music Man” later this season.

Afternoon performances of “Really Rosie,” which runs just over one very quick hour, continue at WPTC’s alternative stage at the air-conditioned Weston Rod and Gun Club through July 9. For ticket information, call the WPTC box office at (802) 824-5288 or visit its website at www.westonplayhouse.org.