



The Enchanted Pig. Chris Poole, plays in the mud.

Photo by Rick Donhauser

The *Enchanted*, an original work by director Rodney Franz, deftly weaves together traditional folk tales and myths in a sophisticated tapestry of life, humor and spectacle. See review by Duncan H. Brown on page three.

BY DUNCAN H. BROWN

THEATER REVIEW

The Enchanted, a new show by Rodney Franz

The *Enchanted* is all about stories and the people who tell them. Because it is a show written and directed by Rodney Franz, it is bursting with quality, beauty, humor and poise. It feels like a Broadway show, filled with music and songs and dance. Stir in some mime, some puppetry, some amazing masks, and some of the choral reading flavor of the Iowa Speech Competition, and you have a recipe for an enjoyable and delightful evening's entertainment.

The Enchanted wraps itself around the story of a wandering stranger who seeks shelter on a cold, rainy night. A strange family greets him, and asks nothing in exchange for the warmth, food, and bed they offer except that he tell them a story. When he says he has none, he is instead asked to go out to the well for a bucket of water. And therein starts his tale.

He is magically carried from one place to another by wind and water, and drops into one story after another. Further, many of the people he meets tell him their own stories. The tales are wrapped one in the other like nested Russian dolls, each one a glittering gem of a narrative that draws us further and further in. These aren't just stories, but enchanting visions evoking Hans Christian Anderson, *Psyche* and *Amour*, and Harry Potter. You also don't want to miss a superb film, "The Teapot" by Joshua Young and Geoffrey Boothby that transports this performance to another dimension.

The Enchanted is propelled by a wonderful ensemble group of actors and actresses whose performances are compelling as a group—especially when

they transform themselves into mud, or mountains, or forests, or an ocean. The choreography by Katharine Vigmostad is stunning, and the original music by Derek McCarty carries the show. Each cast member presents multiple characters (including some very curious ones), and do such a great job that this production could equally well have been seen in Chicago or Boston or New York.

Chris Poole is the wandering stranger, and is delightful as *The Enchanted Pig* (at one point, one gets a terrifying taste of what it's like when hog lots take over the land).

One of the funniest stories for me was that of *The Laziest Man in the World*, brought to life by Steve Pappin. David Murphy brings his wonderful deep voice to his characters. Andrew MacKenzie is particularly touching as *The King With Three Daughters*. Katharine Vigmostad shines as *Princess Aurelia*. Darla Murphy and Melanny Wells are also memorable as *Princess Sophia* and *Princess Tallulah*.

Some of my favorite characters were the amazing *Virginia Blaze* (*The Mother of the Sun*, played by Chris Poole), *Circe* (the whimsical *Mother of the Wind*, played by Anna Bruen), and *Mama Luna* (the comforting *Mother of the Moon*, played by Zander Stone): they are wholly original. I also won't soon forget the stone door.

Altogether *The Enchanted* is a blast and a must-see. — dnbrown@iowatelecom.net.

Performances: 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 23, Friday & Saturday nights, Nov. 25, 26 and Dec. 2, 3, 9, and 10. Tickets on sale at the At Home Store and at the door.