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## 'Hamelin' reworks the legend of the Pied Piper

By KATIE HUGHES McKEE  
Posted: 04/08/2010 01:30:26 AM PDT

Imagine Edward Scissorhands meets Pinocchio meets the Pied Piper. That's what awaited the audience on opening night of "What Happened in Hamelin," a production of Red Egg Theater on Easter weekend.

Local author/director Gina Marie Hayes took her inspiration for this play from a podcast of "Stuff You Missed in History Class," in which the legend of the Pied Piper was explored -- his motley or "pied" appearance, usually attributed to his clothing but which, to some modern researchers, suggests a mottled complexion or a large birthmark. Also discussed were the dark, disturbing undertones of the myth, particularly surrounding the fate of the children at the end. In one version, the children are found safely living in Transylvania and don't want to come home; in another, their parents enter the cave and find nothing but bones in the dust. In still another ending the parents find nothing at all.

Hayes, in her director's notes, asks, "But what of the Piper? Is he mentally deranged, or simply misunderstood? After being cheated by the town's elders out of his payment for exterminating rats, he leads away the children of Hamelin, but is never mentioned again in the story. The creation of this play was an exploration of the magical underpinnings of the legend, and the fate of the Piper."

Upon entering the Actor's Theatre, I was immediately drawn into an alternative universe. At the center of this universe was a boy with a large birthmark on his face, dressed in

tattered clothing, cradling a puppet/doll/child. A rat perched on his shoulder. On the black wall to his left were hundreds of screaming chalk faces. To his right were several tiny Alpine houses set on a vast green hillside. Eerie music filled the room. I wrote: "disturbing." Even more disturbing was the woman above me and to my right who nattered at the top of her voice about some perceived slight until the lights mercifully went down and she shut up.

What followed was a delightful melange of drama, humor, and puppetry, with a surprise for the audience in the first several rows thrown in. The acting from an ensemble cast consisting of Noah Averbach-Katz, Flynn Crosby, Ian Fullmer, Erin Johnson, Kirsten Macaulay and Boris Volkov was superb, as was the evocative sound design by Mathew Schreiber and the lighting by Amelia Rain

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Olson. The haunting set was designed by Sunshine Buckets and Chris Frost, using repurposed materials. The imaginative costumes and props in this production were also made from recycled items, making it a "green" show. Even the makeup deserved a bow.

Back to "disturbing:" publicity for the show states that it is "not appropriate for children under the age of 12." I would amend that age to 6. The young kids who sat in the front row loved it. It's also surprisingly short -- only 45 minutes, so it works for those of any age who have television-generated attention spans: it's the length of a TV show on DVD, without the commercials. Do come see this production. It runs only one more weekend and you will kick yourself if you miss it.

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**IF YOU GO**

'What Happened in Hamelin'  
 presented by: Red Egg Theater and the Santa Cruz Actors' Theatre  
 WHEN: 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday  
 WHERE: Actors' Theatre, 1001 Center St., Santa Cruz  
 COST: \$10 general, \$5 students and seniors  
 DETAILS: [redeggtheater@gmail.com](mailto:redeggtheater@gmail.com)

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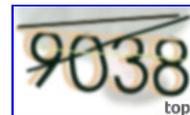
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