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## Young Conservatory Players Make 'Magic'

November 26, 1986 | LYNNE HEFFLEY

Sixteen young people, ages 10-17, took the Founders Hall stage at the Orange County Performing Arts Center over the weekend to prove that their "Magic Theatre '86" is the real thing.

No tricks, no strings, no mirrors.

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The jaunty musical revue, performed by the Young Conservatory Players, graduates of South Coast Repertory's performing arts training program, celebrated skills learned and imagination stretched.

In a glowing, star-studded circus ring, the performers, dressed in glittering white with touches of black and silver, were clowns, dancers, gypsies, trick riders, lion and lion-tamer.

This wasn't a circus act, however. The big-top setting and costumes, beautifully designed by Dwight Richard Odle, created a bright, festive atmosphere for the circus troupe to act out several allegorical stories, each containing a lesson for kids.

Robert Dominguez's Bandleader became "The Boy Who Sat on His Anger," afraid to express his feelings until he realized getting mad doesn't have to hurt anyone. "I only do bad things when I have to sneak out," said Anger (played by Paul Constantine).

Ringmaster Constantine became the revolving sun, shining on all the people of the earth and pointing out the differences that make them unique.

Daring Bareback Rider Felicia Bleecker, daintily costumed in white tulle, played a Baby Kiss who met and changed the outlooks of a moody Boo, a mean Grabber-Nabber and a furious Mad.

In a segment with wistful undertones, entitled "War and the Tickle," the whole ensemble discovered they'd rather laugh than fight--and wished the world would do the same.

Donna Ruzika's lighting design was especially effective, enhancing both the thoughtful moments and the joyful ones.

Adapted by director Diane Doyle and musical director Diane King from a play by the late Sandra Mathews Deacon, "Magic Theatre '86" offers hopeful solutions to fears and anxieties common to young people. Delivered with such youthful exuberance, the light-hearted messages became unexpectedly moving.

The move to the Performing Arts Center's 284-seat Founders' Hall is a welcome change for the Youth Conservatory Players, which had been rapidly outgrowing its home on South Coast Repertory's smaller 161-seat Second Stage.

The added space creates a new freedom of movement, reflecting the vigor, eagerness and growth of young entertainers who are applying lessons well-learned.

This is the first co-production between the Center and South Coast Repertory--two facilities committed to educational performing arts programs. It augurs well for future collaborative efforts.