



Pam Woolway/The Garden Island

The cast of Hawai'i Children's Theatre Summer Stars production of 'AristoCats' this weekend at the KCC PAC.

'AristoCats' presented by Hawai'i Children's Theatre

Pam Woolway

THE GARDEN ISLAND

For the first time in the 11 year history of the Hawai'i Children's Theatre Summer Stars program the season opened with a week of intensive workshops on voice training and projection, improvisation, dance, acting and even how to audition.

"We wanted to give all the students an equal skill base," said Jen Downs, artistic director for the two signature performances that have brought Kaua'i audiences to the Kaua'i Community College Performing Arts Theatre every summer for nearly a dozen years.

The keiki presentation of "Aristocats" opened last night

and runs all weekend, followed by the youth performance of "Into the Woods" next week.

Set to the hep jazz piano of musical director David Horger, Disney's "Aristocats" is a riotous romp with a litter of "aristokittens" catnapped by a devious butler vying for his madame's affection. Next week "Into The Woods" explores a number of classic fairy tales. When a baker and his wife are cursed by the neighborhood witch, they embark on a quest for special objects required to break the spell. Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood and Rapunzel are among the notables the pair visit. "Into The Woods" showcases an ensemble of Kaua'i's talented singers and actors under the

musical direction of HCT alumnus Samuel Alfiler.

After that first week of theatrical and craft training under their belts, Kaua'i keiki and youth dove into the accelerated study for each musical.

"Not counting the workshop, holidays and all the usual birthday parties, we only had 17 days of rehearsals," said Administrative Director Marti Berrett. The kids practiced five days a week for four hours a day.

Many of the production team are past participants of the program. Downs began her acting career at age 10 when her mother, Bobbie Downs, launched Summer Stars. "Aristocats" director Maile Speetjens joined the program at age 14 and re-

turns to Kaua'i every summer from Boston to teach.

The Hawai'i Children's Theatre is Kaua'i's only year-round youth-produced theater program. Besides the support of alumni, the program is a rich population of work/study students fresh from high school and one intern. It offers a wide variety of educational experiences, including classes for kids ages 4 and up in an energetic and collaborative environment.

"This is more of a team effort," said Berrett. "Everything comes together based on the volunteers."

Downs said the best part of the experience is from an educa-



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Under the direction of a boisterous production team, the Hawai'i Children's Theatre Summer Stars present "AristoCats" this weekend and "Into the Woods" next weekend. Pictured here the crew that makes it happen: Back row, Musical Director Sam Alfiler; teaching assistant Haley Shell; Costume Designer Poppy Shell; staff assistant Dain Metcalfe; "AristoCats" Director Maile Speetjens; Musical Director Dave Horger. **Front row:** Choreographer Lindsay Allen; Artistic Director Jen Downs; Administrative Coordinator, Marti Berrett.

Theatre

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tional perspective. While a polished production is always the goal, she encourages her cast to enjoy the moment and make it about learning.

This year Summer Stars even doubled the amount of students in the keiki production due to having a waiting list twice as long as in the past. Berrett said she usually has 30 students, but this year there are 60.

"We knew we had to expand when there were 30 students on the waiting list," she said.

Students were accepted into the workshops on a first-come, first-serve basis. Rather than turn anyone away, this bold and energetic crew just doubled

the cast. The two cast perform on alternating nights. Berrett said having the two groups worked well as a teaching tool during rehearsal.

"This way one group can watch and learn from the other on stage," she said.

The HCT Summer Stars program is theatre for kids by kids and is now in its 12th year.

Hawai'i Children's Theatre Summer Stars perform Disney's "Aristocats" featuring the keiki tonight, tomorrow and Sunday. Shows are at 7 p.m. Friday and at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door. HCT's older students will perform the Broadway musical "Into the Woods" the following weekend July 17 through July 20. Tickets are \$10 in advance

and \$12 at the door. Call 246-8985 or visit hawaiichildrenstheatre.com

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Want to go?

What: Hawai'i Children's Theatre Summer Stars production of "Aristocats"

When: Tonight at 7 p.m., tomorrow 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Where: Kaua'i Community College Performing Arts Theatre