

Arnold's Favorite Field Trip

OPAS, Jr. childrens' performance takes audiences on a magical bus ride

By RACHEL DAWLEY
Staff writer

The magic school bus rolled into College Station yesterday with the live theatrical production of *Arnold's Favorite Field Trip*, an original musical based on the award-winning PBS series *The Magic School Bus* and best-selling books by Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen.

Over 2,700 children and parents attended Rudder Auditorium to see two performances of the show, the last OPAS Jr. production of the season.

The childhood memories of eccentric Ms. Frizzle and her reptilian sidekick, Liz, reluctant Arnold, witty Carlos, bookish Dorothy Ann, curious Keesha and energetic Wanda came alive in this entertaining show.

The cast captured the hearts of the audience in the 65-minute stage performance, packed with bright costumes, lively music, learning and fun — complete with audience participation.

With an original score by Peter Luyre, composer of *The Magic School Bus* theme song, the music inspired the young audience to clap, dance and sing along.

The cast often sang one bar of a song, then asked the audience to repeat and sing along, encouraging constant interaction.

The audience participation was the most exciting aspect of the presentation.

The show began when the audience was invited to become members of Ms. Frizzle's class, and there was excitement in the air as each agreed to join the crew of the magic school bus as they made their exciting journey to the dedication of the Walkerville Bridge.

What started out as an ordinary field trip to the ceremony soon turned into an adventure in Arnold's pantry, where the class is packing a lunch for the dedication picnic.

As the magic school bus' "puckerbating

retroflator" malfunctions and Arnold accidentally activates the "shrinkerscope," the class becomes the size of popsicles before the audience's eyes.

Trapped in Arnold's locked pantry, the miniature class must use what they've learned about bridges to escape through the open window and return to normal size.

The production captured the audience with its fabulous use of side effects and imaginative use of props.

Large amounts of smoke and bubbles and an amazing light extravaganza kept the audience on the edge of their seats.

"It was really fun," said 11-year-old Sarah Lane, who traveled 50 miles to see the show. "I really liked Ms. Frizzle and all the music and lights."

Jill Sweeney, director of OPAS Jr. and a junior English major, said the group works to bring in shows that appeal to children.

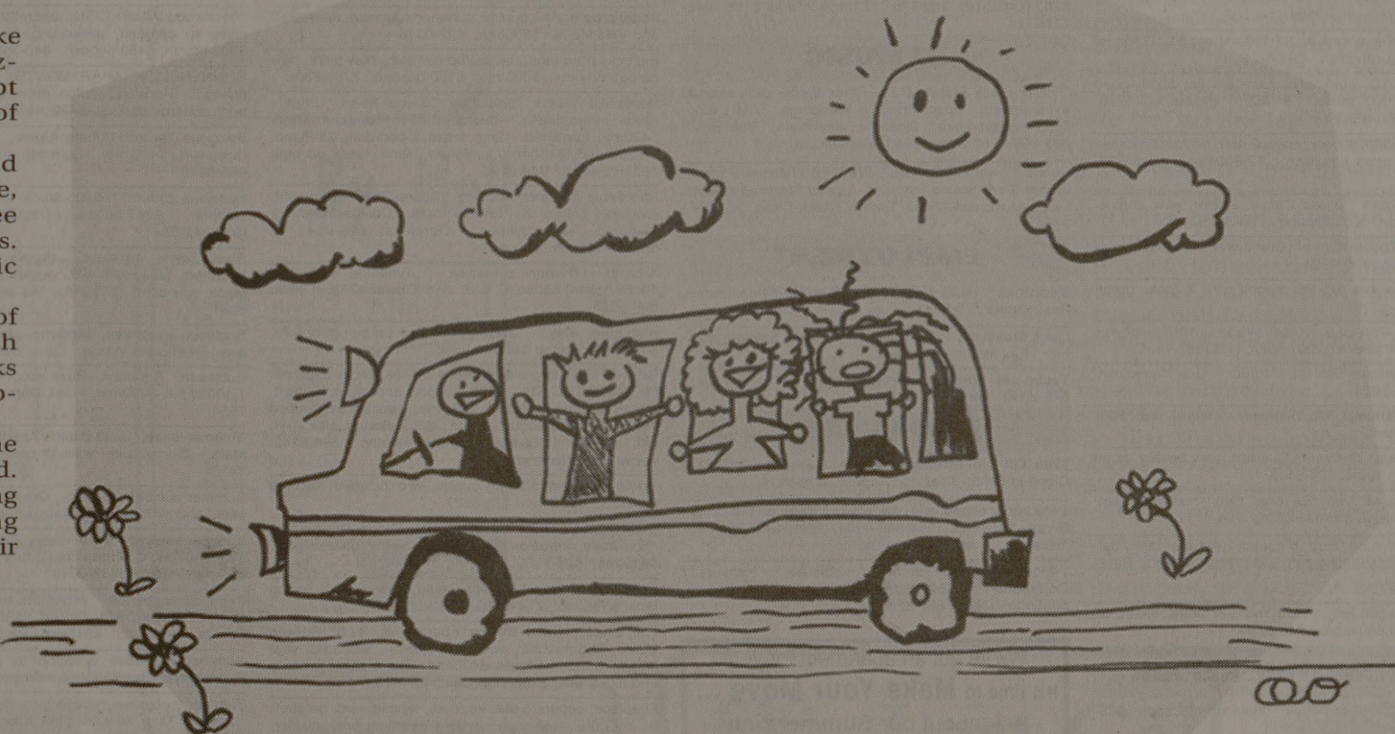
"We want to promote the arts for kids," Sweeney said. "We believe that by exposing children to art at a young age, we will help build their appreciation."

Because the show was underwritten by the OPAS guild, the tickets were \$6.50, as compared to \$15-30 in other areas.

Nine-year-old Thomas Hedrick, a student at Leon Elementary School, designed

the cover of the program. Hedrick, who said he began drawing "when he was two," created an original piece featuring the magic school bus in space.

The musical was reproduced and marketed by The Brad Simon Organization, Inc., and Strawberry Productions, Inc., through their joint venture Bus Adventures Live.



If falling in love is anything like learning to spell, I don't want to do it. It takes too long.
— Cindy, age 7

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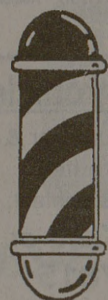
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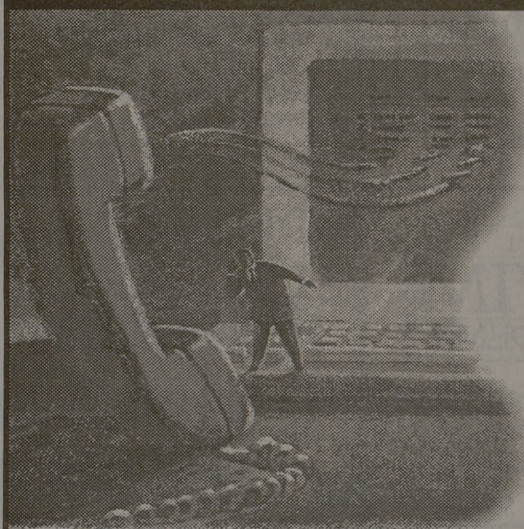
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