

Transporting the Setting of the Beloved Musical, Peter Pan, to Colonial India

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Abstract : This paper is an examination of a recent Michigan State University production of the classic musical, Peter Pan. In this production, approved by the licensor, the action was moved to Colonial India transforming the musical's message to include themes of cultural identity, racism, classism and ultimately inclusion. Major character changes and casting decisions expanded the scope of the musical while still retaining the original book and score. Major changes included reframing the Darlings as British Colonials stationed in India. The Lost Boy's as mixed race children of British officials and their Indian nannies, the Pirates were a female 'fishing fleet' a group of women sent from England to keep the British soldiers from mixing with the locals and the Michigan State University Bhangra Dance Team played the Indians in the production. Traditional Indian theatrical techniques were also employed in the storytelling. The presentation will cover the key changes to the musical, the rehearsal process, historical accuracy and audience reaction. A final analysis of cultural appropriation versus historical reframing will be examined.

Keywords : directing, history, musical theatre, producing

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