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## Entertainment :: Theatre

### The Lightning Thief

by Winnie McCroy  
EDGE Editor  
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Jordan Stanley, Kristin Stokes, Eric Meyers and Parker Drown (Source: Jeremy Daniel)

Theatreworks USA brings some magic into the lives of the city's youth this summer, with the Free Summer Theatre 2014 staging of "The Lightning Thief" at the Lucille Lortel Theatre.

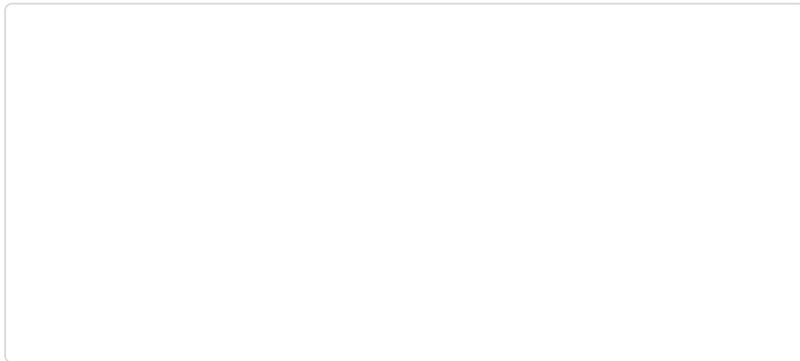
The 60-minute play -- the perfect length for school-aged children -- is adapted from the book by Rick Riordan, and according to my teenage nephew who attended with me, hews closer to the book than to the 2010 movie "Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief."

The story follows a loveable loser teen, Percy Jackson, who battles with dyslexia, ADHD and an absentee father. It's not until after an attack by harpies that he discovers he's a demi-god -- a half man/half god hybrid, with a mortal mother and the god Poseidon for his father.

Although he's not the only "half-breed," he is one of the only demi-god children of the ruling trinity of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades, children of Kronos. And as he realizes at his summer Camp Half-Breed, he's the only one who can stop a war between the gods that has erupted after someone steals Zeus' lightning bolt -- ergo, the lightning thief.

He then goes on a quest to save his mother, battling monsters, cutting off Medusa's head, escaping the lotus eaters and traveling to Los Angeles, the portal to Hades (no surprise, as Percy notes), to put an end to the impending war between the gods.

The play casts the affable Eric Meyers as Percy Jackson, with a goofy Jordan Stanley as his sidekick Grover, a half-man/half-goat satyr. Stanley approaches the role as though he was the understudy for Shaggy in the Scooby-Doo movies, and the goofy stoner routine works like a charm here.



Completing the youth trio is the daughter of Athena, Annabeth (Kristin Stokes), whose character excels in warcraft and is in no way short of courage. Although she was talented, she seemed miscast in this role, and didn't click with the other leads.

Excelling in the role of Percy's mother, banned to Hades, was Zakiya Young. This slightly older African-American actress brought a touching realism to the story of a vulnerable child she would go to any lengths to protect. Plus, she could sing her ass off! Young also portrayed numerous other roles with such ease, it was sometimes difficult to believe it was the same actor.

Getting great laughs from this critic was Parker Drown as Percy's wheelchair-bound teacher, Mr. D, who was later revealed to be a Centaur, with leather puffy pants shaped like horse legs, and a

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leather tassel tail that the actor shook out, to my great delight and amusement. He also played other roles, but made such an impression as the teacher, it was difficult to view him as anything else.

The cast made the most of an almost empty stage, with just a few columns and a scaffolding to work with, some makeshift benches and a rolling cart. In the scene where Percy first discovers his powers, they ingeniously hook up a roll of toilet tissue to a leafblower, to wrap up an attacker in TP. It was as if a low-budge version of "Ghostbusters" was being produced, and it was spectacular!

With more than a dozen original songs and a high-powered, energetic cast, this "Lightning Thief" hits its mark. It's a great play for kids of all ages, and best of all, it's free -- just show up an hour before the show to pick up your tickets. Who says lightning can't strike the same place twice?

*"The Lightning Thief" runs through August 22 at the Lucille Lortel Theatre, 121 Christopher St. For information or tickets, call 212-627-7373 or visit [www.theatreworksusa.org/free\\_summer.cfm](http://www.theatreworksusa.org/free_summer.cfm)*

Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she writes about local restaurants in her food blog, <http://brooklyniscookin.blogspot.com/>

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By Winnie McCroy | Feb 17

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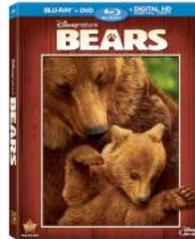


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