Mesmerizing Puppetry Takes the Stage in “Finding Nemo–The Musical”

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The undersea world that charmed audiences around the world in the Disney-Pixar smash-hit film “Finding Nemo” comes to life in a musical stage show at Disney’s Animal Kingdom.

Featuring original songs by Tony Award-winning “Avenue Q” co-composer-creator Robert Lopez and *a cappella* musical “Along the Way” co-creator Kristen Anderson-Lopez, “Finding Nemo-The Musical” immerses Walt Disney World guests in the story of Marlin and Nemo — an overprotective clownfish father and his curious son — through a dazzling production that combines puppets, dancers, aerialists and animated backdrops.

The visually inventive show represents the first time Disney has taken a non-musical animated feature, as well as the first Pixar film, and transformed it into an original musical production. It is presented in the enclosed 1,500-seat Theater in the Wild, completely redone to accommodate first-class theatrical productions.

During “Finding Nemo-The Musical,” Theater in the Wild becomes a colorful, “coralful” undersea world through innovative lighting, sound, special effects, animated projections, and the theatrical puppetry of Michael Curry, who co-designed the richly detailed character puppets seen in the Broadway version of Disney’s “The Lion King.”

Principal characters such as Marlin, Nemo and Dory are represented by live performers operating animated puppets. Some puppets are larger-than-life — such as Crush, the cool sea turtle, who is nearly the size of a Volkswagen, and Nigel the pelican, who stands 22 feet tall.

Other characters are portrayed by a diverse array of puppetry styles, including rod, Bunraku and shadow. Tap dancing sharks, puppets riding bicycles, and a punk rock routine by Bruce the shark create theatrical magic and fun throughout the big blue world.

The director for the show, Peter Brosius, is artistic director of The Children’s Theatre Company of Minneapolis, winner of the 2003 Regional Theatre Tony Award. The Broadway show “A Year with Frog and Toad,” nominated for the Best Musical Tony Award, originated at The Children’s Theatre Company.

“Finding Nemo-The Musical” is the first major musical produced for Walt Disney World Resort by Disney Creative Entertainment, which has received acclaim for its productions around the world, including “Disney’s Aladdin” (at Disneyland Resort in California), “Festival of the Lion King” (at Hong Kong Disneyland), “Twice Charmed” (on the Disney Cruise Line) and “The Golden Mickeys” (at Hong Kong Disneyland and on the Disney Cruise Line).

“Finding Nemo-The Musical” tells the story of a father clownfish, Marlin, and his son, Nemo, each on a separate journey that ultimately teaches them how to love and understand each other. The two have been separated — and Marlin will stop at nothing to get his son back, facing undersea challenges with his new friend Dory, who swim with the sharks, take on the jellyfish, and ride the current with Crush the turtle. Meanwhile, Nemo, relocated to a fish tank in Sydney, makes new friends who teach him that he’s stronger than he thinks. When news of his father’s heroic journey reaches the tank, Nemo is inspired to do whatever is necessary to escape the tank and see his father again.

“Finding Nemo-The Musical” is a 30-minute show, performed several times daily. Admission to Theater in the Wild is included with regular Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park admission. Guest information is available by calling 407/824-4321 or by visiting disneyworld.com.

Disney’s Animal Kingdom theme park celebrates one amazing adventure after another with wild animals, exciting attractions, lavish stage shows and lovable characters. Highlights include a runaway train adventure, an authentic African safari and a thrilling race back in time to prehistoric worlds.

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