

OFF TO NEVERLAND

IF YOU GO ...

What: "Peter Pan" presented by River Raisin Ballet Company.

When: 7 p.m. Friday, 2 and 7 p.m. Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday.

Where: River Raisin Centre for the Arts, 114 S. Monroe St.

Tickets: \$18 for adults, \$16 for senior citizens, \$10 for students and children. Tickets available by calling 242-7722, at the box office or online at www.river-raiscenre.org.

Leads Daniel Davenport as Peter Pan and Abigail Fleszar, 15, as Tinkerbell square off with one another on the island of Neverland.



With help of a little pixie dust, River Raisin Ballet Company reprises 'Peter Pan'

BY PAM MEADE

pmeade@monroenews.com

Peter Pan's directions to Neverland are "second star to the right, and straight on till morning."

But this weekend, Monroe area residents need go no farther than the River Raisin Centre for the Arts.

The River Raisin Ballet Company is presently the original ballet "Peter Pan" this weekend at the RRCA in downtown Monroe.

"We've made some changes since our 2010 production," said Gail Choate-Petit, director of the ballet company and creator of the ballet. "We've expanded some scenes and changed some of the choreography to reflect the talents of the dancers we have now."

The ballet is based on the works of Scottish novelist J.M. Barrie, who created



— Evening News photos by KIM BRENT

Jeff Boze once again stars as the sinister Captain Hook in the RRCA's ballet "Peter Pan," which runs this weekend at the theater.

the character Peter Pan. A mischievous boy who can fly and who never ages, Peter Pan spends his never-ending childhood adventuring on the small island of Neverland as the leader of his gang, the Lost Boys and interacting with mermaids, Indians, fairies, pirates, and occasionally ordinary children from the world outside of Neverland.

As in Mr. Barrie's story, the Monroe ballet focuses on Peter bringing ordinary children Wendy and her younger brothers, John and Michael, to Neverland.

"We've brought in Daniel Davenport from Ypsilanti to play Peter," Ms. Choate-Petit said. "He's been in a few of our other productions."

Mr. Davenport, a mem-

ber of an Ann Arbor modern dance company, most recently performed at the RRCA as the Knave of Hearts in the ballet "Alice in Wonderland."

"His natural elevation and turns will make the audience believe he is flying," she said.

In 2010, videographer John McCarthy used video projections on a screen to give the illusion of the dancers flying in the night sky. While he'll use similar effects for this production, there may be some surprises, Ms. Choate-Petit said.

"We always take advantage of the changing technology available to us and in just three years there are more special lights and projections now available at our fingertips," she said. "We also hope to be able to use some new suspension techniques to create the illusion of Peter flying."

The three leading female roles in the ballet will each

be shared by two dancers, with each getting the chance to play the role in two of the four performances.

Wendy will be played by Reina Cooke and Toni Fedewa, Tinkerbell by Abigail Fleszar and Lindsay Navarre, and Tiger Lilly by Darcy Howland and Prisca Jentzen.

"We have a nice group of dedicated dancers, and by letting people share the roles, we give more people a chance to display their talents," Ms. Choate-Petit said.

Jeff Boze, who often plays the comic relief in the ballet company's dances, will reprise his 2010 role as Captain Hook. And Josh Mohler, described by Ms. Choate-Petit as a "wonderful and high energy comedic actor" will play Captain Hook's sidekick, Smee.

Some new characters and scenes will be added this

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'Amazing Thing' author hopes people find common bond

■ Despite our differences, we all want the same things, says Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

BY BARBARA KROLAK
barb@monroenews.com

If author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has a mission in life, it might be to bring everyone — no matter their race, color or creed — together as one.

She wants us to consider ourselves one community, so it's apropos that her book, "One Amazing Thing," was chosen as Monroe County's One Book, One Community read this year.

"We should think of all people as human beings. We all want the same things ... the pursuit of hap-



HER 'AMAZING THING'

"During a pilgrimage trip to India, deep into the Himalaya Mountains, I got separated from my group and might have died on the ice. Then a stranger came and helped me and took me to our camping site. I tried to find him the next morning, but he had disappeared! I never saw him again."

— Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

piness," Dr. Divakaruni, a native of India, told The Evening News in a recent telephone interview from her home in Houston.

The University of Houston creative writing professor will speak about her book, her work and her life Wednesday night at Monroe County Community College as part of the One Book festivities.

"One Amazing Thing" tells the story of a diverse group of people

trapped in a basement after an earthquake. As the people await their hoped-for rescue, tensions rise, so one young woman suggests each tells a story about "one amazing thing" that has happened in his her or life.

The book was borne out of a stressful situation Dr. Divakaruni found herself in in September, 2005.

"There was a major hurricane

coming, Rita, and they asked everyone to evacuate Houston because it was very dangerous. This was just after Katrina devastated New Orleans," she recalled.

The roads were jammed with vehicles.

"We were stuck on the freeway in the middle of the night, at 2 a.m., with hundreds of people. ... We were out on the open road. Everyone was jammed together in this situation with strangers. People were panicking just like people do," she said.

So she wondered how could this mass of people become a community?

"Here you are, stuck in a place where there's no way out. What

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IF YOU GO ...

Who: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, author of "One Amazing Thing," the One Book, One Community selection for 2013

When: 7 p.m. Wednesday
Where: Meyer Theater, La-Z-Boy Center, Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Rainsville Rd.

How much: Free

More information: www.monroeccc.edu/onebook/index.htm; www.chitradivakaruni.com