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THEATER REVIEW

Sugar Plum Fairy, P.I. gives a noir twist to fairy tales

Lifeline's newest KidSeries offering turns to Dashiell Hammett for inspiration.

by **Kerry Reid**
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Daniel Rivera (L) and Anthony Kayer in *Sugar Plum Fairy, P.I.* at Lifeline Theatre
Credit: Josh Bernaski

What would happen if Dashiell Hammett wrote *Fractured Fairy Tales*? If you've never pondered that possibility, **Lifeline Theatre** has the answer in their latest KidSeries offering, *Sugar Plum Fairy, P.I.* Inspired by Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, adapted by Aly Amidei, and directed by Robert Kauzlaric, the show gives a goofy noir spin to characters from beloved children's tales, including Peter Pan, Hansel and Gretel, Goldilocks, and of course the title character, a former star of *The Nutcracker* who's traded in his toe shoes to be a gumshoe.

Sugar Plum Fairy, P.I.
Through 11/8: Sat–Sun 11 AM and 1 PM; understudy performance Sat 10/24 1 PM, sensory-friendly performance Sun 11/1 1 PM; Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood, **lifelinetheatre.com**, $22, recommended 5+

Can I attest that kids love this kind of thing? Not for certain, since there were more adults than kids at the matinee I attended. But like Jay Ward's short satirical takes on fairy tales built into *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends*, Amidei's script knows how to give a nod and wink for older audience members while still building a story filled with elements familiar to kids who love the classic characters.

The premise? Sam Sugarplum (Anthony Kayer) is approached by a dame named Ms. Mary Belle (Christin Prince). She's lost her little lamb—a small black sculpture that, we soon learn, contains pixie dust. A certain shadowy figure named Thursby Shadow (Jermaine Jenkins), who is literally a shadow, is somehow wrapped up in the plot around the lamb. Things in town, which is really the Magical Forest, are already a little fraught, what with candy being outlawed (forcing Sam to chew on a celery stick as if it were a stogie) and new mayoral candidate Peter Pan (Daniel Rivera) promising all the fun and delicious things on the campaign stump you'd imagine a boy who won't grow up would offer. (So he's like most other politicians, in other words.)

Amidei's script is chock-full of noirlike bonbons. "I didn't catch your name," Sam says to Mary Belle when they first meet. "I didn't throw it," she replies. There are also shout-outs to other pop culture touchstones. Sam describes the former sweetshop run by his former love interest, the Candy Witch (Cris King, who is also a great hardboiled secretary as Goldilocks) as "a regular hive of scum and villainy," a la Mos Eisley in Star Wars.

The simple but effective set and props by Bobbie Buie and Amidei's costumes offer plenty of eye candy and sight gags for kids and adults alike. And as a longtime fan of classic noir, I say you can never get the kids onboard with the style too soon. *Sugar Plum Fairy, P.I.* is a sweet, smart, and sassy Halloween treat.