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The Falmouth Theatre Guild

The Falmouth Theatre Guild has been in operation for more than 50 years, and its stellar reputation has established it as the foremost community theater on the Upper Cape.

This spring, its production of *Peter Pan* graces the stage from April 24 to May 10. The show boasts a powerful leading cast and talented supporting actors. Directed by Davien Gould, *Peter Pan* is a great way to celebrate spring and visit Cape Cod before the summer droses arrive.

The Falmouth Theatre Guild calls itself "the only community theater on the Upper Cape dedicated to producing big Broadway musicals." Past shows include *Our Town* in 2008 and *Annie* in 2007. This season, Jaime Lynne Stuart plays the role of Peter; Rob Minshall doubles as Mr. Darling and Captain Hook; and Wendy, Michael, and John are played by Anneke Elmhirst, Connor Moulton, and KoBi Howerton respectively. Ellen McDonald plays Tiger Lily, and Lynne Bergh plays Tinkerbell. A host of other players grace the stage as Indians, pirates, and lost boys.

The Scottish novelist and playwright, J.M. Barrie, introduced the character of Peter Pan in *The Little White Bird*. The stage production of *Peter Pan* wowed audiences in the early 1900s, and Barrie continued to succeed as a playwright and novelist. The musical, a magical performance punctuated by memorable and colorful characters, follows Peter Pan on his adventures while he refuses to ever grow up. The show, famous for its catchy songs, "Never, Never Land," "I Won't Grow Up," and "I Gotta Crow," is a treasure sure to delight young and old alike. *Peter Pan* is truly a gift for the whole family.

The Falmouth Theatre Guild has actively influenced high-caliber performing arts on the Upper Cape since its inception in 1957, when Betsy Rogers, an Emerson College drama-major graduate, collaborated with others to create the guild. A talented actor and set and costume designer, Rogers became the first president of the guild. She also played Ellen in the guild's first production, *Goodbye My Fancy*.

Other people have played integral roles in the establishment and success of the guild, such as Gil Rapoza, a member since 1960. Still active on the board of directors, he directed the 2006 production of *Nunsense A-Men*. Rapoza has had a hand in more than 70 shows in his years as a guild member.

The Falmouth Theatre Guild is a part of the American Association of Community Theaters. AACT is the national voice of community theater, with more than 7,000 theaters across the United States and overseas in the armed forces. The organization represents the interests of community theater members and offers invaluable information and resources regarding the culture and nuances of community theater.

The current venue that houses the Falmouth Theatre Guild boasts a rich history. Shortly after the railroad came to Falmouth in 1872, the Beebe family of Boston acquired 700 acres of land above the railroad station and converted structures on the property into their summer homes. More than half of that land has been preserved as Beebe...
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The wealthy family built gorgeous houses on the property, and they contributed to Falmouth's financial health in the late 19th century by supporting various city projects.

After the last of the Beebes died in 1932, their estate passed through various hands. Eventually, Arthur J. Beckhand ran two of the mansions as hotels and converted a former stable into what is now Highfield Theatre. A Texas oil man, DeWitt Ter Huen, purchased the entire Beebe estate in 1949. He dreamed of converting the estate into a performance compound of sorts. He hosted theater companies and offered workshops and classes.

Developers purchased the estate upon DeWitt’s passing with intentions of building housing development. Luckily, Josephine and Josiah K. Lilly III came to the rescue and donated nearly 400 acres of Beebe Woods to the town for permanent conservation. But after 1977, Highfield Hall entered into a decade of abandonment. In 1994, the wrecking ball threatened Highfield Hall, but an advocacy group, Friends of Highfield, saved the building.

Restoration of the structure was a long endeavor, but in 2006, Highfield Hall celebrated its grand reopening. Now the building and its surroundings are available for tours, weddings, and other elegant affairs. Further information about the hall and Beebe Woods is available through a link on the Falmouth Theatre Guild’s website (www.falmouththeatreguild.org).

So a trip to the theater could turn into a day-long adventure at one of Falmouth’s mostest estates. The Falmouth Theatre Guild’s Peter Pan runs Friday and Saturday nights at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. through May 10th. Tickets are available online through the guild’s website falmouththeatreguild.org or by calling 508-548-0400.★