

RDT's 'To the Rescue' Is Full of Heart

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SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

If the independent production "To The Rescue" is a harbinger of the coming dance season, this will be a year to remember. The program, created by Repertory Dance Theatre's Andy Noble, closes its run with a matinee today at the Rose Wagner Center in Salt Lake City.

Noble and his collaborators have crafted that rarest of treasures — a work of dance theater that has heart and conveys a message.

The piece delves into the reasons for adult neuroses, then lets "Fritzzy," the main character, do what few therapists can accomplish: accept the past and take responsibility for the future.

Elements of the show could have been mere cutesy gimmicks. But tucked into this beautifully

devised, cogent whole, they become the threads of an intricate tapestry.

Noble, a dancer from a family of writers, has penned text for Fritzzy and friends that demonstrates unusual maturity for an essentially first-time effort. Like the movement, the presentations convey multiple levels of meaning within single images.

Humor and drama are balanced especially well, with humorous bits conveying a weighty message and the darker moments a sense of compassion about the human condition. Fritzzy psychoanalyzes his own parents at one point by using a technique called "Primal Bark." It's a serious subject with great satire.

There is one particularly fine example of blending comedy and tragedy. RDT's Nathan Balser appears on several occasions as a superhero whose cape recalls the scarf worn by the Tom Baker Dr. Who. During his first appearance,

a child hops onto the cape and he bears her off as if the encumbrance did not exist. When young cast members hop onto the cape, he continues to move forward though he is dragged down by the weight.

He appears a third time with the lengthy cape tethered by an off-stage presence, making him unable to move forward at all. In fact, without struggle, he slides back into the wings. The choreography and Balser's exquisite sense of comedic timing make this the funniest piece of the show with a message that rings clear. That is even superheroes can be bogged down by the dross of emotional baggage.

One exceptionally moving section features the kids alone doing no more than shifting between poses that suggest agony.

With "To the Rescue," Noble, his cast and collaborators, have not only set the bar for the coming dance season but have raised it a significant number of notches.