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THE IOLA REGISTER

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'Poppins' practically perfect

By RICK DANLEY
The Iola Register

If Wednesday's dress rehearsal is any indication, the Iola Community Theatre is prepared to deliver one of the finest productions in years.

ICT's staging of "Mary Poppins" benefits not only from a rich cast of actors, dancers, and singers, but from professional-grade stagecraft, including a rigging system that hoists the umbrella-gripping nanny up into the rafters when stage direction requires her to take flight.

"Mary Poppins" debuts Friday night at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. Tickets are on sale at Sophisticated Rose or at the Center's doors before performances.

The familiar musical tells the story of an enchanting nanny who enters the stiff Edwardian-era household of Mr. and Mrs. Banks and their two children after the sudden departure of the family's previous governess.

Sabra Aguirre brings her impeccable voice to the title role, and is flawless as the unflappable nanny. Jim Stukey, with his mobile face and pitch-perfect Cockney drawl, casts a comic charm across the two-act show in his role as Bert, the big-hearted part-time chimney sweep. It's worth the cost of a ticket (\$15 for adults, \$8 for kids) for their performances alone.

And Everett Glaze and Cali Riley, who are on the stage a majority of the night, are unfairly good as the two Banks children, Jane and Michael.

The emotional arc of the musical depends on Mr. Banks' transformation from a humorless, distant, career-minded head of household into — after Poppins knocks the scales from his eyes — a tender and loving father.

Jim Gilpin, a sunny bank president in real life, plays the dour banker in "Mary Poppins." Gilpin manages



Above, Jim Stukey and Sabra Aguirre rehearse a scene in advance of the Iola Community Theatre production of "Mary Poppins," which runs Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoon at the Bowlus Fine Arts Center. Also in the photo are child actors Everett Glaze and Cali Riley. At right, Bryan Johnson sings a tune. In back is Jim Gilpin. REGISTER/RICK DANLEY



Mr. Banks' awakening with ease, accumulating a couple of moving solos along the way. Mrs. Banks is played by Kristina Palmer, whose crystalline

voice is one of the highlights of the show.

Susan Raines is memorable as the terrifying replacement nanny — the anti-Poppins, Miss Andrew. Andrew ladles cod liver oil down the gullets of her charges, where earlier in the show Poppins, famously, provided a spoonful of something nicer. Raines stalks the stage, snapping orders at the kids, flashing her teeth and casting wild-eyed stares at anyone who crosses her path.

The musical face-off between the two nannies, the infernal Miss Andrew and the

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Joint church service Sunday

Iola's three United Methodist Churches will have a joint community service Sunday.

Members of Wesley, Calvary and Trinity United Methodist Churches will meet at 10 a.m. Sunday at Iola's Riverside Park for "Keeping It Real: Jesus in Me, Jesus in Family, Jesus in the Community."

"This is a great opportunity for members and non-members to get together and

meet our new pastors," said Mary LaCrone, one of the event's organizers. "We want to make this a huge event."

Among the service's topics will be how to turn to Jesus in times of struggle, particularly for those dealing with poverty, unemployment or those unable to find suitable housing. They'll also speak

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Senator may consider Medicaid expansion

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A Kansas Senate leader has indicated Republicans may consider looking at a form of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act amid the looming closure of a hospital in southeast Kansas.

Mercy Hospital in Independence announced last week that it was closing its doors Oct. 10, and cited several factors in its decision, including declining reimbursement rates from Medicare, the program that provides health care for older residents.

"I've never been amenable to just an expansion of the Affordable Care Act," Senate Vice President Jeff King, who is from Independence, said Tuesday. "But as we look at states like Indiana that take a real state-centric

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— Sen. Jeff King, R-Independence

approach to addressing the health care needs of their poor, I think that's something that Kansas needs to strongly consider."

At least 30 states have implemented some kind of Medicaid expansion plan. But other states, including Kansas, have chosen not to expand Medicaid, causing many hospitals to suffer.

The only Medicaid expansion bills introduced in the Kansas Legislature have been in the House, which has refused to allow debates or votes, the Lawrence Journal-World reported.

Lower reimbursement rates were one of the key financing provisions of the

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Quote of the day

"No man was ever wise by chance."

— Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Roman statesman



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