

STAGE NEWS & NOTES

DARYL H. MILLER

'Max and Zoey' helps banish the bogeyman



For a youngster, life can seem pretty scary at times. Even the most ordinary things can be eerie if a child doesn't understand them.

understand them.

Dion Alden Holt and her husband, Will Holt, try to erase some of this fear in their musical children's show, "Max and Zoey, Zoey and Max," which reopened Saturday at the Back Alley Theatre in Van Nuys.

The show teaches children healthy, positive ways to think about chicken pox and strange noises at night. The idea, Dion Alden Holt explained, is to teach kids that unpleasant things can be thought about in fun ways.

The 30-minute show is divided into two parts.

In the first, a 4-year-old named Max has chicken pox. He thinks the red dots that cover his body are scary, but his cousin, Zoey, thinks they're so neat that she wants some too.

Max's mom demystifies the body's process of fighting disease by talking about how the body's "good bugs," the antibodies, fight the "bad bugs," the antigens. The principle is demonstrated by having children come on stage to participate in a game of tug of war.

In the second part, Max overcomes his fear of strange noises at night. His mother explains that night noises might sound scary, but they're just normal noises. Mom encourages him to become the "director of night noises," and he directs the audience in making noises.

The show's target age range is 2 to 8, but many adults could stand to learn how to turn bad into good. "I really feel that you can turn most things around," she said, acknowledging with a laugh that this attitude has earned her a reputation as a Pollyanna.



Ken Hoyt, left, Terri Girvin and Lisa Gates star in "Max and Zoey, Zoey and Max," on stage at the Back Alley Theatre.

In addition to teaching the audience an important lesson in life, the show exposes children to theater. Children are encouraged to come on stage and play with wooden blocks before the show begins so that they won't have stage fright later when they are asked to participate.

Will Holt adapted the show's script and music from a series of children's stories that Dion Alden Holt is seeking to have published. Adult actors Terri Girvin and Ken Hoyt portray Zoey and Max, and Lisa Gates is narrator and mom. The show was presented at the Back Alley in late July and

The show teaches children healthy, positive ways to think about chicken pox and strange noises at night.

early August, then went on a brief hiatus.

The show's current run continues through Sept. 17, with performances at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The Back Alley Theatre is at 15231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. For more information, call (818) 780-2240.