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In Kidbeat's six years of reviewing theater for young people, the Mark Taper Forum's Improvisational Theatre Project has usually ranked No. 1. This

year, top marks go to its production of Lisa Loomer's "Bocón!," a potent blend of Central American mythology and stark reality, staged in dream-like style by ITP artistic director Peter C. Brosius.

The rest of the year's best, in no particular order:

Lois Young, who earned an honorable mention in this column last year, comes out a winner with her new and improved "The Lois Young Show," a humorous, gentle

hour of music, storytelling and cuddly puppets for preschoolers.

In the Back Alley Theatre's "Max & Zoey, Zoey & Max," writers Dion Alden Holt and Will Holt, turned observations of young grandchildren into a high-energy, musical romp through childhood fears of scary noises and illness.

On a spring day at the Los Angeles Children's Museum, children 10 and younger got a sweet taste of the Bard in Shakespeare Festival/LA's "Shakespeareance" educational touring program. It combines Elizabethan dance and music, "interviews" with historical figures, audience participation and an exquisite puppet version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

The long-running "Dear Gabby" at the Santa Monica Playhouse was a surprise. Written by Chris DeCarlo and Evelyn Rudie, this off-beat musical about teen *Angst*, performed by a teen cast, turned out to be an articulate journey through adolescent loneliness and confusion. (The show is now touring in Japan.)



Lois Young in her new and improved "Lois Young Show," a humorous, gentle hour for preschoolers.