

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

Philosophical ‘Pooh’ will be just what we need in March



Opening Statement

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As Chicago's live theaters continue to go dark for now because of the COVID-19 surge, there is a little light out there to brighten us. "Winnie-the-Pooh" is scheduled to open onstage March 15 at the Mercury Theater, 3745 N. Southport.

I know it is a little early to announce the arrival of everybody's "silly old bear," but I have to admit that he is one of my all-time favorites, and I would not want you or your family to miss this charming tale of Winnie and all of his friends from the Hundred Acre Wood.

I also have to admit that the A.A. Milne children's classic was not part of my family's tradition when my boys were young. In fact, I personally was not exposed to Winnie until I was approaching my midlife crisis.

At that time, I was more interested in self-help books like "The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People," "I'm O.K., You're O.K.," and anything written by the late Wayne Dyer. So I was still searching more than 30 years ago when I walked into the first of Barbara's Bookstore in Old Town, where I suddenly found myself looking at a little book with the intriguing title "The Tao of Pooh" by Benjamin Hoff.

Back then, I had no knowledge of Tao or Winnie the Pooh.

The book was written as an introduction to the Chinese philosophy of the Tao, perceived by Lao Tzu, by comparing it to Milne's books and illustrating that Winnie, by following its principles of inaction as opposed to overreacting to a situation, was essentially a Taoist Eastern scholar.

As I started Hoff's book, which contained many of the original passages from "Winnie-The-Pooh" and "The House at Pooh Corner," I found myself cracking up at the hilarious activities, not only of the innocent, simple Winnie, but of the silly musing of all his friends — the timid Piglet, bouncy Tigger, gloomy Eeyore, pontificating Owl, scatterbrained Rabbit, the hovering, wise mother, Kanga, and her wild child, Roo. All were illustrated by the pen of treasured artist E.H. Shepard.

I was also captivated by the simple, unobtrusive philosophy of the Tao Te Ching, all of which led me on my quest to explore everything Taoist and everything Pooh, taking me to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Pooh's Hundred Acre Woods in East Sussex, England.

Starting with the purchase of original Disney production cels of Winnie and Piglet, my collection now includes copies of Pooh in every language from Latin to French to Hebrew and even Pig Latin and Esperanto. It also includes stuffed toys and valued glass and crystal replicas of all the characters, as well as numerous items I refer to as "poohfanalia," filling a room in our home affectionately known as "the Pooh Room."

So now you know why I am anxiously awaiting this production, which will run through June 22.

Produced by Jonathan Rockefeller, of Rockefeller Productions, after a record-breaking run in New York with music by Disney composing brothers Richard M. and Robert B. Sherman, the show will feature life-sized puppets of the characters.

And for those of you puppet show enthusiasts seeking a fix ahead of Pooh's arrival, the Chicago International Puppet Festival returns Jan. 20-30 at venues throughout the city, with more than 100 performances of styles including bunraku and shadow puppetry. For a comprehensive event schedule, check out chicagopuppetfest.org. Highlights include a show based on Lydia Diamond's adaptation of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" at the DuSable Museum of African History and puppet play "Chimpanzee" by Nick Lehane at Instituto Cervantes.

The new 'Oklahoma!'

Warning: This item contains "Oklahoma!" spoilers.

According to a recent report by the Chicago Police Department, the year 2021 had 797 homicides in the city and an increase in shootings that make up frightening statistics reflective of what is going on in the country.....