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By Laurel Graeber

Although those who rise to power often do so on the backs of others, this is literally true in the *Dr. Seuss* story “*Yertle the Turtle*,” in which the title character makes himself the tallest throne from a stack of his subjects. The hero is the bottommost turtle, Mack, and by the end, well, how the mighty have fallen.

This tale, beloved by young readers is now being performed by them in a triple bill of one-act musicals by *The Children’s Theatre Company*. The showcase is dividing according to the age of the actors, and “*Yertle*,” adapted by Lory Lazarus, presents the talents of the tiniest. Training 4 to 7-year olds is an art in itself, and what this production lacks in seamlessness it makes up for in charm. “*King Kunka Bunka and the Rotten Royal Rascals*,” by Mehr Mansuri (the troupe’s founder and artistic director), Frank Sanchez and Nasan Fitzhenley, features 11- to 14-year olds. Written in Seuss-style rhyme, the show centers on a widowed monarch’s search for an heir. Her children, hopelessly unqualified, represent vices indicated by their nicknames: Proudaska, Chatterina, Rudekof, etc. Their deficiencies exposed, the royal offspring are sent off to spend a year at tasks intended to reform them. (Chatterina, for instance, has to work in a library.) Acted with great brio, this tuneful fairy tale emphasizes the value of service without being preachy.

The final one-act, “*Respect: A Musical History of Women*,” based on a book by Dorothy Marcic, uses popular song to chronicle American women’s struggle for rights and self-awareness. Enthusiastically performed by actors ages 7 to 11, it travels a musical route from “*Bill Bailey*” (1902) to “*I Will Survive*” (1978) and beyond. It’s all great fun, with one caveat: The program runs slightly over two hours. Like children at the table, those at the theatre often do better with a delicious snack - say, one or two of these shows - than with a three-course banquet.