

# Setting sail

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- By Phillip Sitter [phillip@newstribune.com](mailto:phillip@newstribune.com)



From left, Evan Backues as Jim Hawkins, Barry Beach as Dr Livesey and William Runyon Jr. as Squire Trelawney review a treasure map in a scene for the upcoming Little Theatre production of “Treasure Island.”

The Little Theatre of Jefferson City’s “Treasure Island” is a “stunning yarn of piracy on the tropical seas.” The production will set sail Jan. 11-13.

About half of Laura Vedenhaupt’s current co-workers are pirates, but she’s not in danger despite the prominence of the skull and crossbones among her motley crew.

More than not being in danger — especially with a fight coordinator overseeing the swordplay — Vedenhaupt said it’s “a dream come true” to be able to direct a stage adaptation of her favorite book growing up, Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Treasure Island.”

The Little Theatre of Jefferson City’s production of the novel — “a stunning yarn of piracy on the tropical seas,” according to the description on the theater group’s website — will be on stage Jan. 11-13.

Vedenhaupt knows Disney’s “Pirates of the Caribbean” film franchise is probably “what this generation thinks of as pirates,” and added that’s a good way to get people interested in the classic Stevenson tale. However, she got her inspiration for the local stage production by returning to the old Disney version.

She said this show will be a “serious relationship drama,” particularly centered around the relationship between protagonist teenager Jim Hawkins and betrayalful father-figure pirate Long John Silver.

“There is pressure being good and bad,” said Dave Bond, who plays Silver. Bond explained Silver’s motivation is on the one hand to greedily fight for treasure, but he does have an instinct to protect Hawkins, and that internal duality “changes the way (the character) looks at things.”

A story with dramatic gravitas doesn’t preclude some sword-fighting, though.

Vedenhaupt said most of the show's cast had to learn swordplay in addition to their speaking lines. A fight coordinator was brought in to "teach us how not to kill each other."

There's only so much hornswoggling — pirate speak for cheating — in staging a sword fight; the props are made of metal, so they'll give a good "clang" when they hit one another. Vedenhaupt said the swords are "a little bit sharper than a butter knife."

She added it's "very safe, but don't try it at home," and there haven't been any injuries. She said the cast has actually overcome their initial trepidations quite a bit when they started out training with wooden sticks.

She doesn't want to mutiny too much against the "Pirates of the Caribbean" cultural tides of perception of pirates, either. The show's costumes are historically accurate, to a point, but are ultimately meant to convey what modern audiences expect a pirate to look like, to get people to think, "That is a pirate."

Harley Quinn is a service dog who will be in the show in scenes without swordfighting. There will not be a live parrot, but a stand-in with a voice through sound effects will play the part.

The production's main set is the deck of a ship, which will split and rotate to become other scenes' sets.

"It's a fun show, fun story," Vedenhaupt said, and one open to any age of audience member.

The Little Theatre's production of "Treasure Island" will be at 7:30 p.m. Jan. 11-13 at the Miller Performing Arts Center. The Miller box office will be open 5-7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday and 5-7:30 p.m. each night of the show. Tickets are \$15.

More information about "Treasure Island" and other performances is available at [tltjc.org](http://tltjc.org). The theater group's number is 573-681-9400.