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Review

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow by [Megill & Company](#)

Despite the summery weather, Halloween is galloping relentlessly towards us. But the holiday has already come to a head at the Avo Playhouse in Vista. Megill & Company has brought Washington Irving's classic American ghost story *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* to the stage in the form of **Heather Megill's** original musical, right where it debuted two years ago as a youth production by Encore Youth Theatre and earned a record eight Youth Billie Awards. This time it's all grown up with an adult cast and little added touches here and there to try to make it a tad darker than the original.

Heather's version of *Sleepy Hollow* includes the characters from the original story, but with several others added to give it more depth. It also includes a different twist to the ending that only deepens the mysterious conclusion that has always given the story such appeal, wondering *who* is the Headless Horseman, and *what* really happened to Ichabod Crane...

The most intriguing of Heather's new characters is here played by Heather herself, the ghostly Woman in White who narrates the story with a strong otherworldly feel and inescapable sense of insanity enhanced greatly by how Heather speaks and sings each word. Mentioned briefly in Irving's story as one of the many ghosts haunting the area, *this* Woman in White believes herself to be one of the victims of the Headless Horseman, and believes Ichabod may be next. Although her haunting of Ichabod in order to warn him may scare the highly superstitious Ichabod to death sooner than it saves him! In a brilliant stroke, the Woman in White leads an ensemble of female ghosts, each with a jagged red scar around their necks (represented by a beaded necklace), at least a couple of whom are present from the moment you walk into the theatre and in every scene of the play as they sadly and silently watch the living go about their lives, and often act as props by holding up different pieces of the set like window frames, Ichabod's bed, and, during one romantic ballad between Ichabod and Katrina Van Tassel, a ghost walks through with a fluttering butterfly!

An impressive cast is led by **Jeff Parker** as the town's new schoolteacher Ichabod Crane, and you'd swear he truly was Ichabod reincarnate. Looks, voice, and mannerisms combine to create the perfect lanky, learned, nerdy yet romantic, and nervously superstitious Ichabod as he courts the lovely Katrina (**Brittany Paige** who has a stunning voice), and as he endears himself to his new neighbors in Sleepy



Hollow like the young Jonathan (**Steven Hypnarowski**) who learns how to do some courting of his own in *Almost a Man*. Of course, he doesn't endear himself to quite everyone. Definitely not Brom Bones (**Jason Lee**), the hilariously arrogant town bully who wants the beautiful Katrina (and her family's farm) for himself. Can the growing love between Ichabod and Katrina overcome both Brom Bones *and* the Headless Horseman???

Gorgeous and startling lighting effects by **Richard Hellstern** enhance the show throughout, especially in the climactic chase scene in which Ichabod tries to outrace the menacing Headless Horseman (played by himself) – a scene that also includes my favorite piece of the set in the form of Ichabod's old and painfully slow horse Gunpowder (also played by himself).

Filled with romance, humor, mystery, great music, and lots of ghosts (both of the headless variety and, as *Harry Potter* fans would say, some that look to be *nearly* headless), Heather's *Sleepy Hollow* quickly gets you into the Halloween holiday spirit!

Performances through October 26, 2003.

[Rob Hopper](#)

San Diego Playbill

~ Cast ~

Ichabod Crane: [Jeff Parker](#)

Katrina Van Tassel: Brittany Paige

Brom Bones: Jason Lee

Woman in White: Heather Megill

Ghosts:

Christine Bull

Carina Cure

Hayley Kelly

Genevieve Koesling

Haley Robinson

Townspeople:

Mr. Van Dyke: Anthony Streano

Mr. Thomasson: [Ted Leib](#)

Mr. Van Kinder: Paul Fenner

Mr. Van Tassel: Keith Black

Mrs. Van Tassel: Freda Nelson Evans

Mrs. Pierce: Jennefer Gillette

Lars Thomasson: Tristan Faulk-Webster

Mrs. Thomasson: Therese Holladay

Schoolchildren:

Jonathan Van Kinder: Steven Hypnarowski

Rachel Thomasson: Emily O'Brien

Quick Thomasson: Kevin Webb

Robert Thomasson: Kyle Gemmell
Monty Van Pelsen: Nathan Ayling
Emily Van Pelsen: Janessa Gillette
Sharon Van Pelsen: Amy Hypnarowski
Elsa Van Dyke: [Brittany Sharkey](#)
Anne Van Dyke: Christina Burns
Margaret Van Dyke: Karina Gillette
Jane Van Dyke: Lirenza Gillette

Director: Heather Megill
Co-Director: Theodore Leib
Co-Choreographer: Catherine Jones
Supervising Stage Manager: Keith Gemmell
Co-Stage Manager: Eric L'Heureux
Costume Design: Jane Craig-Jones
Lighting Design: Richard Hellstern
Sound Design: Donald Megill, Jeff Polunas, Ally Nelson
Set Design: Keith Gemmell