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## Theater review: Fun for the house in excellent 'Mouse'

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Eww. Ouch. Hahaha.

From mild disgust to animated concern to unbounded guffaws, director Peter Brosius' physically fearless production of "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie" provokes a lot of visceral responses. With actors Dean Holt and Reed Sigmund as guides, the show takes you on a journey of messy, side-splitting hilarity.

You could tell from the beginning of "Mouse/Cookie," which opened Friday and is adapted by Jody Davidson from Laura Joffe Numeroff's popular children's book, that it would be supersilly.

Big-eared, long-tailed and twitching with energy, Dean Holt, as the mouse, leaps into the home of a red-headed boy. The young fellow, played by hubba-hubba actor Reed Sigmund, has innocently invited the cute rodent in for some milk

to go with the cookie he has already given him.

But the boy has no idea of the catastrophe his kindness will cause. The mouse asks for a straw for his milk, then uses all the straws in the box to blow the milk out of his cup. He then wants to help to clean up but winds up causing more of a mess. Lots of comic mayhem ensues.

"Mouse/Cookie" is the leadoff of Numeroff's series of children's books, including "If You Give a Moose a Muffin" and "If You Give a Pig a Pancake," all of which double back to end at the beginning. The enjoyable books feel like stories about a dog chasing its tail.

I was interested to see what the Children's Theatre would make of such thin source material. The production has an unnecessary intermission, perhaps nodding to the concession stand and to small bladders. That's about all

you could fault with this "Mouse/Cookie."

Part of its charm derives from Brosius' directorial approach, which pays homage to the acting style of silent film star Buster Keaton. It's as broad as all vaudeville, with loose hairballs running around, mirror tricks, the transformation of objects into characters, and Victor Zupanc's colorful, zany sound score.

There is a lot of play here, a lot of funny business. Holt and Sigmund are a hoot together. Whether Holt is eating marshmallows and spitting them back out, or leaping and landing on a table, he is totally committed to his character.

Ditto for Sigmund, who plays the strong straight man to Holt's bag of mousy insecurity and obliviousness. Their bounding collaboration makes this "Mouse/Cookie" into a romp that might just give you the laughter equivalent of a sugar high.