

■ MUSIC

High-energy team recruited for new show

By Mark Marymont
For the News-Leader

BRANSON — Bob Wehr got the idea for the Magnificent 7. Then he called on veteran entertainer Chisai Childs to carry out his vision.

The result is "The Magnificent 7," a new show at Wehr's Branson USA Amusement Park and Theater. The cast includes six long-time Branson musicians and 13-year-old Amanda Haffecke, who worked on Childs' last production, "Branson Spotlight."

"We were doing our little show over on 165, (at the Towne Center Theatre)," says Childs of "Branson Spotlight." "When he (Wehr) hired me to come over here, I took the cream of the crop from that show, including Amanda, and some other players, and we came to Branson USA."

They are now appearing at the 800-seat Branson USA Convention Center and Theater.

To round out the cast, Childs, who opened her Starlite Theatre (now the Legends Family Theatre)

20 years ago, held auditions or called on old friends, "and while some of the guys knew each other, they had never worked together. But Mr. Wehr pays them well, and they were more than willing to come over to our new theater."

Haffecke sings songs associated with Britney Spears, Reba McEntire, Dolly Parton and others and duets with some of the guys. They include music director and keyboardist Bobby Hamilton, bassist Jeff Donichy and drummer and harmonica player Larry Lauder.

Also in the cast is Dean Church, who plays fiddle and violin and has worked with Childs since he was 14. Steve Harbor is featured on banjo and guitar and Paul Detrich is on keyboards.

Besides playing their instruments all the men sing a wide variety of material, from the Beach Boys and Righteous Brothers to Sammy Davis Jr. and the Beatles. Lauder also plays Mayberry deputy Barney Fife.

"What Bob saw was a show that



The Magnificent 7 is a new show at Branson USA Amusement Park and Theater.

Want to go?

- **What:** The Magnificent 7
- **When:** 7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday
- **Where:** Branson USA Amusement Park and Theater, 1383 Missouri 376
- **Tickets:** \$21.95 for adults; \$5 for kids 3 to 9; free for kids 2 and younger (prices for admission to show only)
- **Information:** 335-2396; 1-877-487-2386 or www.branson-usa.com

had seven entertainers, and they played all the music and sang the songs, changed costumes and and

even changed the set," Childs says of the show. "He loved the concept of such a high-energy show and he said to me there was nothing like that in Branson now. So that's when I put the cast together."

Childs says she and Wehr (who opened the park two years ago) make a good team when it comes to producing a show.

"Bob is a dreamer and with my 42 years of show business experience, we came up with a good show," she says. "Of course, we put a crazy, wacky Branson touch to it and made some other adjustments, like having a segment for veterans. But it's still different from all the shows here."

Childs says the show is geared to younger visitors, "adults in

their 30s with kids, but there are also things in there that people of any age group can enjoy."

"All the people we have in this show have a lot of experience," she continues. "Amanda just turned 13, but she has a professionalism beyond her years. She does so many voices and characters and changes clothes probably 20 or 30 times. They have pegged her as a little Chisai and I have even been teaching her some of my comedy material, including my trademark clown number."

"The other guys have been around the Branson area backing up the stars and now are in the forefront," Childs adds. "They finally get a chance to show people what they can really do."

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(Branson USA)

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