

Summer's Stock: May through August with the Area's Seasonal Theatre Troupes

Written by Mike Schulz

Tuesday, 16 December 2008 09:39

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More than a third of the area productions I attended this year - a whopping 35 of them - I saw in the 91-day span from May 17 to August 15. And more than half of *those* shows - 19 in all - were produced by a combined five theatre organizations: Rock Island's Genesis Guild, Eldridge's Countryside Community Theatre, the Clinton Area Showboat Theatre (CAST), Mt. Carroll's Timber Lake Playhouse, and Davenport's newly established Riverbend Theatre Collective. My experiences with this quintet formed a fascinating theatrical journey, one boasting plenty of highs, occasional lows, randomly bitchy Web-site comments

In order of occurrence:

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May 17: *Elegies, A Song Cycle (Riverbend)*. The debut offering by artistic director Allison Collins-Elflin's company features a batch of lovely songs, enthusiastic work by Patrick Gimm, Jackie Madunic, Dana Joel Nicholson, and Collins-Elflin herself, and is my first exposure to the vocal chops of Music Guild veteran Bryan J. Tank. By the end of the opening number, I totally understand why I'd been hearing raves about his *Jekyll & Hyde* and *Scarlet Pimpernel* performances for years.



May 29: *Thoroughly Modern Millie (CAST)*. It's always a kick returning to the Showboat, even if this *is* the third summer in a row I'm seeing this musical. The production isn't bad - and Alison Luff and Dallas Milholland are *excellent*

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- but among

Millie

's annual area presentations, this one still winds up being my third-favorite.



June 6: *West Side Story* (Timber Lake). A pretty good first act leads to a really great second act, but I'm less stoked by the show than I am by seeing so many talents familiar from previous

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summers. Look, there's Jeremy Day, and Samantha Dubina, and Justin Banta, and Holy crap, is that Heather Herkelman from last summer's *Anything Goes* at Music Guild?! Awesome!



June 19: *You Can't Take It with You* (Timber Lake). Like *Millie*, this is another show I'll be reviewing for the third time now, and perhaps sensing how acquainted most audiences are with the material, the cast performs at near-warp speed. You know that *Schoolhouse Rock* song "Three is a Magic Number"? It's kind of a lie.

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June 20: *The Compleat Wrks of Wilm Shakspr [abridged]* (CAST). Joshua Estrada and the Showboat's artistic director Craig A. Miller are very funny in this three-man Bard satire. Ryan Schabach is so outrageously demented and unpredictable that I don't know whether to give him a standing ovation or the number for a really good psychotherapist.

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June 21: *The Sound of Music (Countryside)*. My first Countryside experience since 2007's spectacular *Seussical* finds me enjoying some lovely vocals and visuals, but overall, the production is just ... weird. The tempos are all too slow, several actors are delivering lines to the audience rather than each other, and Act II opens with a reprise of "Lonely Goatherd," which wouldn't be bizarre if the song hadn't been cut from Act I.

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Photo by Dustin



Photo by many,



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Photo 18: *The Friends Bar* (Timber Line) Directed by Kityrka Shue, with Tom Fawcett



Photo 19: *The Friends Bar* (Timber Line) Directed by Kityrka Shue, with Tom Fawcett



Photo 20: *The Friends Bar* (Timber Line) Directed by Kityrka Shue, with Tom Fawcett

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July 19: *For the Love of a Princess* (Cincinnati Children's Theatre) The young prince and princess are interacting before the wedding



July 21: *The Producers* (Timberlake) The original words of the musical are being performed



July 25: *Grease* (Cincinnati Children's Theatre) The original words of the musical are being performed

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And the 12th Annual Florida Grand Oldies Contest is now underway. The contest is open to all Florida residents and is held annually in the state capital, Tallahassee.



Stage 11 by Creative Arts Center, Inc. is a professional theatre company that has been producing high-quality theatrical productions since 1982. The company is located in the heart of downtown Tallahassee, Florida.