

Written by Thom White

Monday, 28 November 2011 06:00

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Before November 26, I didn't know much about Junie B. Jones beyond her being the main character in a popular children's book series by Barbara Park. With that in mind, I felt I needed to enlist the help of my family's resident Junie B. expert, eight-year-old Madison, to adequately review the Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse's production of *Junie B. in Jingle Bells, Batman Smells*. (Madison is, after all, the show's target audience, as opposed to this 37-year-old, balding male.) I suspected that if she was pleased with the play, I would be, too.

But as it turned out, I left the show feeling that I enjoyed it whether Madison did or not. (It turned out she did.) Playwright Allison Gregory's script and director Kimberly Furness' staging deliver enough humor – and humor that only the adults in the audience would appreciate – that I was legitimately laughing throughout the performance, rather than simply chuckling in amusement at childish jokes. For example, at one point, the character of Sheldon (Marc Ciemiewicz) chokes on his lines in his school's Christopher Columbus play and, in his role as the ship the Niña, breaks into a nervous rendition of Styx's "Come Sail Away." What eight-year-old is going to appreciate *that*? I, however, giggled over the bit for quite a while, and it was one of *many* jokes in the production to elicit lasting laughter from me.

Brat Packed: "Junie B. in Jingle Bells, Batman Smells," at the Circa '21 Dinner Playhouse through Decem

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