

Written by Mike Schulz
Monday, 18 June 2012 06:00

- [199.95\\$ Corel Painter X3 MAC cheap oem](#)
- [79.95\\$ Microsoft Office InfoPath 2010 with SP1 \(32-bit & 64-bit\) cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Dreamweaver CC For Dummies](#)
- [Discount - 1Click DVD Movie 3](#)
- [Buy OEM ABBYY FineReader 8 Express Edition MAC](#)
- [Buy OEM Adobe Photoshop CS4 Extended](#)
- [Buy OEM Access 2007 All-in-One Desk Reference For Dummies](#)
- [Download CrossOver 9 Professional MAC](#)
- [Download Autodesk Showcase 2012 \(32-bit\)](#)
- [Buy OEM JoeSoft Hear MAC](#)
- [79.95\\$ Adobe After Effects CS4 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Civil 3D 2013 \(32 bit\) \(en\)](#)
- [Download Microsoft Office Excel 2007](#)
- [Buy AutoCAD 2007 For Dummies \(en\)](#)



The scenic design for the Clinton Area Showboat Theatre's *Into the Woods* is deceptively simple – basically a half-dozen white drop curtains hanging ceiling to floor, with a few stone steps decorating the otherwise bare stage. But don't be fooled: Like a rabbit being pulled from a hat, something truly magical emerges from this production's minimalist-by-necessity façade.

Of course, beginning with its populace, composer Stephen Sondheim's fairytale musical is hardly *wanting* for magic. With Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack (of beanstalk fame), and numerous other storybook figures each seeking their personal Happily Ever After, *Into the Woods*

' narrative

has enchantment built right in, and additional wizardry comes via the songs' haunting melodies and dazzlingly clever, insightful lyrics, some boasting the power to make you laugh and tear up in the same breath.

Yet to my mind, the experience becomes truly great with the arrival of Act II, when the high comedy and light poignancy give way to a profound exploration of marriage and family and personal responsibility. (Admittedly, this might be a minority opinion; I have several friends who adore the show's frisky first half but don't much care for its more melancholic second.) And similarly, the Showboat's version of *Into the Woods* finds an entertaining and engaging Act I leading to a second act of beautiful, touchingly underplayed emotionalism. Director Tommy

Written by Mike Schulz
Monday, 18 June 2012 06:00

lafrate and music director Drew Wutke have a cast that can sing Sondheim's daunting score with panache, and that's a blessing. But what's even happier news is that lafrate and Wutke have actors who perform with such nuanced expressiveness – who let you understand what, exactly, is driving their characters to do what they do and sing what they sing.

The *best* news is that they're able to do this while also making you laugh. Monique Abry's Cinderella and Matthew Gorgone's Jack, for instance, are effortlessly beguiling comedians – Abry's dreamy, wistful klutz enduring a series of face-first (and first-rate) pratfalls, Gorgone's endearing simpleton suggesting that Jack's head was in the clouds long before climbing the stalk. (Gorgone is at his comic best when pining over the fate of his cow Milky White, whose demise earned perhaps the biggest roar at Thursday's opening-night performance.) In their respective "On the Steps of the Palace" and "Giants in the Sky" solos, however, Abry's and Gorgone's smart, specific interpretations of Sondheim's lyrics reveal the dormant wisdom in their flighty characters, so the laughter they generate is generous and empathetic. If these twitter-brains can achieve moments of such self-awareness, you reason, there's hope for us all, and *Into the Woods* finds other performers skilled in the art of blending outsize character comedy with nearly heart-wrenching truthfulness, with the spirited, funny portrayals by Brian Cowing's Baker, Heather Botts' Baker's Wife, and Nyla Watson's Witch becoming deeply touching as book-writer James Lapine's narrative grows more threatening.

lafrate's tender, thoughtful take on this material, though, is plenty of fun even *without* all that gloriously Sondheim-ian angst that we fans of musicals adore. Outfitted in costumer Dusty Shaffer's enjoyable fairytale wardrobe – Emily Eisenman's and Megan Mohs' wicked stepsisters being the beneficiaries of Shaffer's most outlandish designs

– *Into the Woods*

' cast is upbeat and alert; Anthony Sagaria and Darian Lunsford are particularly riotous (and in excellent voice) as vocally dueling princes, and Cole Mitchell Rauch's fey Steward is magisterial ennui incarnate. With designer Marly Wooster providing lovely, ever-changing lighting effects, the show looks terrific, and thanks to the cast's vocals and the impressive musicians, it generally sounds terrific – although on Thursday, I did question the positioning of the orchestra on both sides of the Showboat's upper mezzanine. For some reason, the keyboardist on the house-left side was amplified so that he was louder than the half-dozen musicians sitting opposite him, which occasionally led to awkward-sounding arrangements (and which momentarily startled me every time the keyboardist began a new number).

And having started with it, I may as well end with a nod to scenic designer Jonathan Sabo's wonderfully unassuming set, one that allows the musical's tales to be told partially through silhouette – a cheekily employed device that continually pays comedic dividends. Whether Cinderella is conversing with a tacky mobile of birds (with the strings showing), or Allison Winkel's Little Red Riding Hood emerges, disgusted, from a wolf's stomach – or, in a

After Ever After: "Into the Woods," at the Clinton Area Showboat Theatre through June 24

Written by Mike Schulz
Monday, 18 June 2012 06:00

cackle-worthy bit, when Watson's Witch unexpectedly pops out from behind a curtain to interrupt an on-stage squabble – the pleasures delivered by the show's curtains are both readily visible and totally unforeseen. Just like the many pleasures in the Showboat's *Into the Woods*.

Into the Woods runs at the Clinton Area Showboat Theatre (303 Riverview Road, Clinton) through June 24, and tickets and information are available by calling (563)242-6760 or visiting ClintonShowboat.org