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Silliness, skill are winning combo in songfest 'Seussical'

By Paul Lamar

Monday, December 8, 2008

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SCHENECTADY — During the intermission of “Seussical: The Musical,” ardent theatergoer Gioia Ottaviano proclaimed, “They’re having fun being silly.”

Right she was. And she knows as well as anyone the hard work it takes to be silly. Director Eric Shovah, choreographer Melissa Lacijan, and music director Daniel Galliher have set the bar high for this exuberant cast of 22, and from first number to last in this song-packed show, every performer swings on it with aplomb.

'Seussical: The Musical'

WHERE: Schenectady Light Opera Company, 826 State St., Schenectady

WHEN: Fri.-Sat., 8 PM; Sat.-Sun., 2 PM

HOW MUCH: \$22, adults; \$12, children under 13

MORE INFO: 1-877-350-7378

Lynn Ahrens & Stephen Flaherty have fashioned a charming celebration of the works of Dr. Seuss, focusing on The Cat in the Hat (Brian Avery) and Horton the Elephant (Adam M. Coons).

Naturally the silliness slyly delivers life lessons in simple Seussian lingo. “A person’s a person, no matter how small,” “Oh the thinks you can think,” and “How lucky you

are” are such lyrics.

The music runs the gamut from pop/rock to ballad to Motown, a tuneful amalgam of styles suitable to the well-known characters. For example, Amanda Serrano, red-plumed in one of Thomas Dalton Bambury’s beautiful costumes, struts her stuff, Latin style, in “Amazing Mayzie” and “Mayzie in Palm Beach,” while Dashira Cortes as the Sour Kangaroo delivers “Biggest Blame Fool” like Snap!

Heather D’Arcy, who anchors numerous SLOC productions, mugs, sings, and dances her way through the travails of self-doubting Gertrude McFuzz. That she has the pipes so late in the show for “All for You” is testimony to her gifts.

Joe Davila as the boy Jojo, out of whose imagination the story emerges, hits his

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marks dramatically and is moving with Coons in "Alone in the Universe."

Melissa P. Hoffmann and Ross M. Snyder score as the sweet, befuddled mayoral couple of Whoville, and Gary Hoffmann, as Gen. Schmitz, humorously makes pomposity of the circumstances.

The Cat in the Hat is, of course, an anarchic feline, and Avery and Shovah have made him both dangerous and winning. The Cat frequently disrupts the status quo with a disguise or accent, giving Avery choice opportunities to display his considerable talents.

Horton is a three-dimensional pachyderm, thanks to Coons' sad eyes, unforced line readings, and passionate singing. This TANYs Award-winning actor beautifully complements the script's antics with the heart the show requires.

Finally, the ensemble. I'd like to see the backstage prop table and costume rack because these rascals have to change everything in a split second, which they do with finesse.

Michael Mensching & Michael McDermott have provided colorful periaktoi for the set; Greg Rucinski is the god of lighting. Other tech features are fine, too, though the clever Power Point is marred by missing words, repeated words, and a misspelling.

There's a lot of entertainment available this month in the Capital Region, but this one, polished to a shine, is not to be missed.

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