

Theatre Eddys

Monday, January 30, 2017

"Anything Goes"

Anything Goes

Cole Porter (Music & Lyrics)

P.G. Wodehouse, Guy Bolton, Howard Lindsay & Russell Crouse (Original Book)

Timothy Crouse & John Weidman (New Book)

[Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre](#)

A trumpet, echoed by a saxophone, announces those first few notes that has everyone in the audience ready to sing along; and once the classic hits start tumbling one after another through the theatre's airwaves, the temptation becomes greater and greater to join in while swaying the body, tapping both feet, and smiling a grin bigger than the Cheshire Cat. After all, this is Cole Porter and *Anything Goes*, the 1934 musical where virtually every song has gone on to be included in the Great American Songbook. No wonder revivals keep gracing the Great White Way, including the latest two in



Joy Sherratt

Contact Information

Reviewer Eddie Reynolds can be reached at TheatreEddys@yahoo.com

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Ratings Legend:

- 5 E's - Loved It - A classic, would see it a second time.
- 4 E's - Really Liked It - Excellent, strong production.
- 3 E's - Liked It - Good production but something is lacking or not clicking.
- 2 E's - Just OK - Below average but had at least one interesting component.
- 1 E - Did Not Like It - Waste of time.
- No rating - A work in progress (reading or workshop), or children's production.

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1987 and 2011 which both won Tony's Best Musical Revival. Not only are the songs of Cole Porter big, perennial draws, but so are his uniquely clever lyrics, the rousing choreography (including one of the best tap numbers in all Broadway history), comical elements that make the best of Vaudeville look dull, and a multi-level love story that is full of mishaps, disguises, and many happy endings for all. But all this is for naught if the production at hand is not first-class, something that is of no concern for the absolutely stunning-in-all-respects, current staging of *Anything Goes* by Pacific Coast Repertory Theatre where every element – cast, direction, orchestra, costuming, choreography – is eye-popping and ear-pleasing superb!

From the moment she sings her first note in the opening “I Get a Kick Out of You,” Joy Sherratt trips lightly and joyfully through Cole Porter’s up and down path of sharps and flats in ways guaranteed to delight. Eventually, she glides into long sustained tones that always ring true and pure or even dives into lower, sultry, smoky tones that tempt and tantalize.

And this is just the first of many songs her blonde-curled, fashion-fancy character, Reno Sweeney, will sing as the fabulous-looking beauty journeys from New York to London on an ocean liner full of dancing sailors; long-legged chorus girls, goofy gangsters, and goofier aristocrats. The nightclub singer is in love with a certain Wall Street broker, Billy Crocker. She joins him in a mutual, love-fest song of one-upping compliments (“You’re the Top”) as lead actor Tim Wagner introduces us to a dashing voice that is as handsome in style and tenor as is his tall, slim body in looks.

But Billy has stowed away on the luxury liner (under what will be a number of wild and wooly disguises) in order to convince debutant and socialite Hope Harcourt (Amy Franklin Leonards) marry him instead of the much older, British stuff-ball, Lord Evelyn Oakleigh (Chris Vettel). Billy croons gorgeously his song of love to Hope (“Easy to Love”) in a voice that reaches the required high peaks with total ease and never a hint of distortion.

Reno has decided to help her pal Billy thwart the planned nuptials that Hope’s mother -- the rather ridiculous Mrs. Harcourt played deliciously funny by Ali Lane. Reno solicits her pal Moonface Martin, a second-rate gangster and “Public Enemy Number 13,” to help her in a series of silly subterfuges, after reaffirming their long-time bonds in a winning duet “Friendship.” Ms. Sherratt and Ray D’Ambrosio sing with glee and gusto, supplementing their close harmonies with coordinated pantomimes and calisthenics-like, facial expressions in a number worthy of the best Vaudeville stage.



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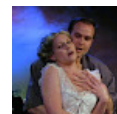
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["Passion"](#)

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["Once"](#)

Once Enda Walsh (Book); Glen Hansard & Markéta Irglov (Music & Lyrics) (Based on the Movie by John Carney)...

The waves of silly shenanigans multiply by the minute as the story goes through countless twists and turns, with every trick and trickster leading to another show-stopping musical number with almost everyone getting a chance to shine at one point or another. In his satin, seaside robe, Billy's bone-headed boss, Elisha Whitney, (who has lost his glasses to in a Moonface-executed caper so that he will not detect Billy on board), raises his glass of bubbly and sounds forth with aplomb in "Crew Song" (with Michael Patrick Gaffney playing the role). His eyes rounder than British pound coins, Chris Vettel sings with baritone bravado right out of Gilbert and Sullivan "The Gypsy in Me," joined in song, flamenco, and bull-fight simulation by Reno. Her voice purposefully squawking and squeaking before absolutely diva-belting its fullness, Melissa Momboisse knocks it out of the park in "Buddie, Beware," as Moonlight's gal is joined by a bevy of sailors in a sensational song and dance number. Moonface himself comes back with a hilarious "Be Like the Bluebird" where his "tweet-tweets," "tra-la-la's," and fluttering mannerisms bring waves of laughter from the audience.

Suzanne Brandt's choreography along with the big, full-cast numbers as directed by David Judson are as close to Broadway perfect as one could ever expect to find in the 'hinterlands' of Pleasanton (home of Coastal Rep). From the mopping, dancing sailors singing in close harmony in "There's No Curse Like Travel" to the hip-swirling, leg-kicking full-company's "Blow, Gabriel, Blow" (the latter absolutely jaw-dropping in its overall rousing sound and production), this company has outdone itself. But it is Act One's finale that anyone who has ever seen "Anything Goes" anticipates with hope and trepidation: Can they tap and tap like nobody's business? The answer is a resounding, "Yes, you bet your red, white, and blue they can!" The entire double-level stage of the ocean liner so ably designed by Patrick Brandon literally shakes and shines with tap dancers galore in total unison of toe-and-heel prowess.

On top of all the other superlatives thus far noted, perhaps there is no greater compliment to this production than the visually marvelous parade of costumes designed by Margaret daSilva – a splendid spectacle that just keeps coming and coming. Reno's magazine-cover-worthy wardrobe alone must fill half the back stage, much less all the other multiple changes that most other characters make as they sail across the Atlantic in style – be they socialites, sailors, chorus gals, or wanted criminals. The sparkling, slinky, snazzy costumes are enhanced by the lighting design of Maxx Kurzunki, as are the changing scenes themselves.

As Music Director, Brett Strader has insured not a missed or out-of-tune note all night by singer or orchestra member, and his six-piece ensemble plays Porter's score in full reverence and yet with inspired interpretation.



"Oedipus El Rey"

Oedipus El Rey Luis Alfaro Magic Theatre Gendell Hing-Hernandez, Armando Rodriguez, Esteban Carmona & Jua...



"One Man, Two Guvnors"

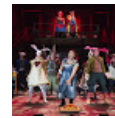
One Man, Two Guvnors Richard Bean (Based on The Servant of Two Masters by Carlo Goldoni With songs by Grant Oldi...



"Cabaret"

Cabaret Joe Masteroff (Book); John Kander (Music); Fred Ebb (Lyrics) San Francisco Playhouse John Paul Gonzalez & the

Kit Kat...



"Alice in Wonderland": Day 7, Show 7, Theatre Eddys Goes to the 2019 Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Alice in Wonderland Eva Le Gallienne & Florida Friebus

Adapted from Lewis Carroll Oregon Shakespeare Festiva...



"Hairspray -- The Broadway Musical": Day 8, Play 8, Theatre Eddys Goes to the 2019 Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Hairspray - The Broadway Musical Mark O'Donnell & Thomas Meehan (Book); Marc Shaiman (Music); Scott Wittman & Marc Shaiman (Ly...



"Between Two Knees": Day One, Play One, Theatre Eddys Goes to the 2019 Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Between Two Knees The 1491s (Dallas Goldtooth,

Sterlin Harjo, Migizi Pensoneau, Ryan Redcorn & Bobby Wilson) Oregon Shakespeare F...



"Mother Road": Day Two, Play Two, Theatre Eddys Goes to the 2019 Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Mother Road Octavio Luis Oregon Shakespeare

Festival Mark Murphey & Tony Sancho Seventy-plus years have past since the Jo...

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- [African-American Shakespeare Company](#), SF
- [Alter Theater](#), San Rafael
- [American Conservatory Theatre \(ACT\)](#), SF

No matter how many times or on what New York or touring stage one has seen “Anything Goes,” the current production by Pacific Coast Repertory Company is well-worth the journey to Pleasanton and the intimate Firehouse Arts Center. In every respect, “It’s delightful, it’s delicious, it’s de-lovely.”

Rating: 5 E

Pacific Coast Repertory Company’s *Anything Goes* continues Fridays – Sundays through February 12 at the Firehouse Arts Center, 4444 Railroad Avenue, Pleasanton, CA. Tickets are available at <http://pcrproductions.org> or by calling 925-931-4848.

Photo Credit: Berenice Sullivan


Posted by [GuyDads](#) at 12:11 PM

Labels: [5 E](#), [Cole Porter](#), [Pacific Coast Repertory Company](#)

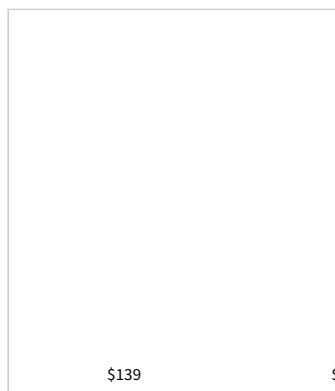
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