

GET YOUR PAPES AND JOIN THE STRIKE, AS HILLBARN THEATRE OPENS NEWSIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

December 11, 2019 | by Vince Vmediaa



'SEIZES THE DAY' AS THE NEWSIES MAKE HEADLINES AND BRING "THE KING OF NEW YORK" TO FOSTER CITY

The cozy Hillbarn Theatre is energized this Holiday season as the hit DISNEY'S NEWSIES is now on stage through Dec 22. Winner of two 2012 Tonys for best score and choreography, this jumping romp is quite impressive. The 1992 film is not the most memorable Disney movie, but is highlighted with a cast of guys kicking and tumbling. The film, featured a young Christian Bale, with Robert Duvall and Ann-Margret. It did poorly at the box office, but has become a cult hit. The 2011 Broadway musical and cast emphasized the electrified dancing that helped the show become a sell out on tour and now on regional stages.



Executive Artistic Director Dan Demers says this musical is packed with high energy and he is excited to present this musical as a Holiday gift for the entire family. Directed by the creative Doug Greer, he made sure to cast the Newies with an all male news boy cast. That was not an easy task as many of the other local productions could not find guys as talented to play the

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news boys and filled out their dance team with girls. Woodminster Summer theatre had to cast women news boys and the same is happening at the Berkeley Playhouse this winter. Demers brought on award winning Zoe Swenson-Graham to take on the challenge of working with a young male team of 10 dancers.



The cast has nothing but praise for Zoe and the intense fall workouts she spent with this terrific company. This musical is designed to make the dance ensemble the stars of the show. Graham's choreography did just that by showcasing the young hoofers with a multitude of dance disciplines and acrobatics. Featuring the high kicking energy of Vishrut Chawia, Tommy Consuji, Ethan Dea, Jacob Fishman, Josh Frojelin, Zach Isen, Harrison Meek, Jon Nowakowski, Ethan Stanart and Tony Woodridge.



Most of the show's big numbers are a banner of defiance. Alan Menken's music and Jack Feldman's lyrics create instant classics like "King of New York" and "Seize the Day." Harvey Fierstein, who wrote the book to the musical, made this a non stop power house dance event while including important history lessons that are applicable to many modern day activist movements.



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The story is roughly based on the actual "Newsboy Strike of 1899," a two-week work stoppage against venal Joseph Pulitzer, played by the polished Shaun Leslie Thomas. The boys go on strike when Pulitzer unfairly raises the price of "papes." They must battle scabs, crooked officials, business types and fearsome strike breakers carrying weapons in an attempt to get their fair prices back. The newsies' problem is not resolved until Teddy Roosevelt, played by the dapper David Issel, steps up to the "malefactors of great wealth" and offers a "square deal."



This cast is impressive! Local favorite Kamren Mahaney is passionate in the role of Jack Kelly, the leader of the Newsies. He immediately shows off his dynamite voice by opening the story with "Santa Fe," where he shares his dreams of escaping the big city with his endearing, handicapped companion Crutchie, played by the marvelous Stephen Kanaski. Alongside Mahaney and Kanaski is the cast of newsboys who bring a powerful energy as they are "Carrying the Banner."



The ensemble of Newsies are headed by the enthusiastic Ethan Dea, who plays the wise cracking Race, and opens the second act with "King of New York," the show's tap number anthem. Davey and his brother Les are played the the superb James Jones and the young Noah Itzkovitz who both bring the show that Disney charm.



Mahaney as the 17 year old Jack Kelly, establishes himself as a likable, sensitive leader. At one of the rousing meetings Jack makes it clear that "All we ask for is a square deal." He continues, "For the sake of all the kids in every sweatshop, factory and slaughterhouse in this town, I beg you, throw down your papes and join the strike." The handsome Mahaney is a good romantic match for the superb Melissa Momboisse who plays the reporter Katherine with stunning class. Momboisse's solo "Watch What Happens" is exceptional and sets up the love interest with the two bubbling leads.



Jones, is solid as Davey, the new boy in town who helps Jack with the strike. He is perfect next to the youngest member of the cast Itzkovitz who plays Davey's 10 year old brother Les. Itzkovitz is seen dancing as keen as the older boys and stops the show with his many one liners, such as "buy a pape from a poor orphan boy". Jones' confidence as Davey continues to grow in "The World Will Know," as the young Itzkovitz continues to charm everyone he meets.



Phaedra Tillery who appeared in the Woodminster production sang her heart out as Medda Larkin the vaudeville star, owner of the theater who helps Jack when he is on the run from the feds. Tillery's solo "That's Rich" features her sexy Bowery Beauties; Vanity Olaires and Briditte Losey, who catch everyone's eyes in "Don't Come a Knocking".



Kanaski as Crutchie steals the show with his clever, resourceful body language for the broken youth. Despite being on a crutch the entire show, he never skipped a beat. Kanaski has an emotional solo "Letter from the Refuge," a new song that was added specifically for the national tour version of the musical.



Director Doug Greer kept the show moving and creates a strong 'Davey and Goliath' dynamic that does not deviate for a moment. In fact, Pulitzer, played by the marvelous Thomas, is the perfect villain who stands his ground until he is eventually tamed by Jack with the help of the Newsies and Teddy Roosevelt. Historically Pulitzer fought for the rights of children but in this Disney version he is the best bully.



Each Newsie proves their dance skills in the many solos throughout the show. Graham's newsboy choreography also includes high stepping tumbling and the young dancers including Chawia, Isen and Fishman prove their excellent ballet and tap skills. Some of their awesome flips, jumps and ballet marvels are highlighted in the show stopping dance number "Seize the Day" and "Carrying the Banner". Graham has created a beautiful collage of demanding ballet with athletic moves. In "Seize the Day," she recreates her own rendition of Christopher Gattelli's

original Broadway dance on scattered newspapers. This trick takes advantage of the paper's inherent slick qualities that had the Newsies sliding across the stage.



The adult cast are all splendid in the many roles they played. High praise goes to Richard Ames, Jerry Arons, Steven McCloud, Alfredo Mendoza, Geoffrey Silk, and the frisky Brigitte Losey who doubles as Hannah, Pulitzer's secretary. The accomplished Ames plays the Mayor of New York and that Dapper David Issel saves the day as Teddy Roosevelt. Music director Jad Bernardo worked with pre recorded music that at times overpowered the cast on opening night yet the diverse cast showed off their strong voices.



The craft team are all pro's – Pam Lampkin's costumes were vintage 1890's as the boys were dressed in their rag dapper look of earth tones and city dirty clothes. The bags for paps fit each boy perfect and their caps are keen. The adult cast are all on-point in their three piece vintage look. Jack cleans up well in the first and second act for his visits to Pulitzer's office. Set designer Paulino Deleal designed a two level Bowery with staircases. The turn-of-the-century New York scenery extends into the audience bringing the show directly to your seat. Stage manager Aya Matsutomo and assistant Ethan Stanearth move the large 30 member cast on off stage with ease and of course a Hillbarn tradition the actors enter from all corners of the Theatre.



The dance is so upbeat and sizzling that sound designer Grant Huberty had to adapt to all the bumps and spins endured by Newsies physical movement. The wigs on the women designed by Y Sharon Peng fit the 1890's fashion. Matt Elsenmann's lighting design sets the mood perfectly as he had to capture both levels of this show, much of the story takes place on the upper levels on the rafters. The lighting is built into the set and in the song reprise "Santa Fe" that ends the first act, Kelly is lit from the back with a shower of blue moon lighting that is brilliant. The props by Michelle Morales included piles of papers, a classic printing press, wagons, and hand made news bags for the guys and a classic typewriter for Katherine.



NEWSIES is a celebration of the power of young voices changing history, it is part history lesson, part fable and part love story. The show is recognizable for being an awesome dance show but it also has heart and will make you stand and cheer for these heroes. This is a great show for your family and it is sure to inspire kids to grab a paper, read the news, and maybe even dance with it. Next up at Hillbarn Theatre is LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS that opens January 23rd, and LA CAGE AUX FOLLES opens in May. In the meantime "Seize the Day" and join the strike and make NEWSIES your Holiday must see.



Hillbarn Theatre Presents
Disney's NEWSIES

The Musical.

Book by Harvey Fierstein.

Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Jack Feldman.

Directed by Greg Greer

Music Director Jad Bernardo

Choreographed by Zoe Swenson Graham

Must close December 22nd

Two hours 30 min with one intermission

Hillbarn Theatre

1285 Hillsdale Blvd

Foster City Ca

Tickets hillbarntheatre.org

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NEWSIES Hillbarn Theatre 5 min edit



