



THE NICEST KIDS IN TOWN TAKE OVER THE SF MISSION DISTRICT FOR THE SUMMER



THE EYE POPPING DANCE PARTY AND HAIR HOPPER TRACY STEALS YOUR HEART IN THIS NON STOP BLAST OF FUN - HAIRSPRAY CLOSES BAM SEASON FOUR

The dance party is non stop at the Victoria Theatre as Tracy Turnbald and her quest to be part of the “nicest kids in town” brings the house down at the Bay Area Musicals non stop production of HAIRSPRAY. The city of 1960’s Baltimore and the Corny Collins Show are now open at the 16th street Victoria stage through August 11th. Based on my hero John Waters 1988 film, book by Mark O’Donnell and Thomas Meehad, and music by Marc Shairman. In 2003 the Broadway hit won eight Tonys, and went on to be a successful movie musical and has been staged by every local stage. But this group of “nice” kids is impeccable theatre pleasure.



Founding director of BAM Matthew McCoy says HAIRSPRAY concludes their 4th season “The show may be light hearted, but it is important to recognize that racial and gender inequality is still an issue.” McCoy who also directed and choreographed this production goes on to say “I believe that theatre has the power to heal and bring communities together. We hope HAIRSPRAY will have you grooving in your seat and leaving the theatre ready to fight injustice.



This eye popping cast assembled by McCoy and casting manager Cat Knight, is a perfect example of the quality theatre Bay Area Musicals is bringing to regional theatre. From the opening number "Good Morning Baltimore" McCoy's clever direction and dance is non stop fun. Set in 1962, at the height of the fight for racial integration, HAIRSPRAY is the story of plump Tracy Turnblad who is going to do whatever it takes to dance her way onto Baltimore's TV teen dance show.



Does the big girl with big dreams and even bigger hair - also win over Link Larkin the hottest boy on the show?

It's a good chance that most reading this have seen HAIRSPRAY in one fashion or another yet a second or third time at the Corny Collins show is always fun. This maybe the best local HAIRSPRAY cast I have

seen, the sheer energy on the Victoria stage kept the sold out opening night audience partying and swinging in their seats.



The enthusiastic Cassie Grilley brings the role of Tracy some new energy and she is terrific. She is a San Francisco native who makes her debut in this cast, and brings the hip sixties to the Victoria stage. Grilley projects the right amount of energy and optimism as she opens the show with the banner song "Good Morning Baltimore" and later "I Can Hear The Bells". "I want every day to be negro day" one of my favorite "Tracy" lines. The vibrant Sarah Sloan is perfect as the villainous Velma Von Tussle, and the priceless Lauren Meyer as her spoiled-rotten daughter, Amber. The two are the perfect mother daughter "mean girls" and Sloan is a stand out in her solo "Baltimore Crabs".



The talented scene stealer Kamren Mahaney brings the Elvis heartthrob karma as Link Larkin and his excellent “Without Love” duet with Tracy. But Mahaney and the cast of “The Nicest Kids in Town” knock you out of your seat in their opening number. The Corny Collins TV Teen Dance show is headed by the charmer Scott Taylor-Cole as Corny.



Local favorite Scott DiLorenzo is cast as Edna, Tracy's mom, and he is divine in "Welcome To The Sixties". Yet a highlight is the duet with DiLorenzo and the wonderful Paul Plain as Wilbur Turnblad. Their chemistry is perfect in "You're Timeless To Me". Show stopper Melissa Mombosse is busy and funny as Tracy's best friend, the nerdy Penny. Mombosse is hilarious as the out of control Penny and her stage timing and crush with Dave J Abrams as Seaweed Stubbs is dynamite.



Abram's brings some spark and amazing moves as Seaweed J. Stubbs, the dancer who ignites Tracy's campaign to bring racial equality to the dance show. Abrams brings the audience to their feet in his featured number "Run and Tell That", that shows off some amazing dance moves from the TBA honored Abram's. The detention kids that support Tracy's new love for R&B include; Calos Carrillo, April Deuschie, Zoe Hodge, Smita Patbanda, Chanel Tilghman, Ajay Prater and Peli Naomi Wood who turn it up for "The Madison".



14yo Kenndy Williams is marvelous as Seaweeds sister, Little Inez with a load of talent and charm. The funny Bonnie Lafer is cast as the female authority in a number of roles - her best being the hilarious gym teacher and prison guard. The snappy Kim Larsen appears as the colorful Mr Pinky and the male authority.



Director McCoy needs to be applauded for perfect casting in the role of Motormouth Maybelle, played by the powerhouse Elizabeth Jones. Her depth of highlighting the darker side of this fight for injustice is proved with the compelling song "I Know Where I have Been" yet another HAIRSPRAY show stopper. Jones brought the sold out BAM audience to a blowout ovation. McCoy's dance sequences with help from Leslie Waggoner gave the opening night crowd a few blisters on their hands from the get-up-and-dance feeling to dance on stage with the cast especially for the high energy "Hairspray" number and later the non stop anthem "You Can't Stop The Beat".



The rich colorful comic book set designed with an animated cartoonish feel by Lynn Grant does not upstage this talented cast, and the moving sets and back lit entrances are perfect for this romp through the sixties. The hair hop Wigs by Jackie Dennis and the hairspray, and colorful sixties costumes by Brook Jennings give the cast giggly camp. Tracy and Ednas coordinated first act dresses are a full throttle parade of bright 60's swagger. Later Edna shines in the satin, feather boas and loads of jewelry. The back lit set and swinging cans of light designed by the award winning Eric Johnson, keep this show bright and full of color.



Along with props Cat Knight is also the Stage Manager and with the help of Andie Fanelli they both kept the cast of 26 on cue including many entrances from the front of the house. Music Director Jon Gallo six man orchestra are on cue, and they hit those “Bells” in “I can Hear The Bells”. The company are a vocal canon on stage in the large numbers including “The Big Dollhouse” that opens the second act.



The signature huge Hairspray can designed by Props team McCoy and Knight, for the closing “You Can’t Stop The Beat” fits the surprise of the banner dance number. “The Nicest Kids in Town” include a keen team of dancers that include; the high flying Ronald James, Stephen Kanaski, Brendan Looney, Steven Mcloud, Claire Pearson and Emma Sutherland.



McCoy and Knight fill the Victoria stage with some perfect energy for the high energy close of the show that brought the entire audience to their feet. From the first time I discovered Divine and her Cha Cha shoes, one of my endearing heroes in film and the theatre community is John Waters. I feel Mr Waters, who is in the Bay Area often, would be pleased with this production at BAM. It is a must see dance party and from the first to last number it is dazzling.



McCoy and his production team deserve every “standing O” they get for every performance. Season Five at BAM begins this fall with the musical GYPSY that opens November 9th, and next spring A CHORUS LINE opens April 11th. Tickets for HAIRSPRAY are easy to get and some nice discounts are available at Goldstar and TodayTix.com. But in the meantime, grab a can of Hairspray get your hair hopped up and go catch the sixties, it is energizing!



Bay Area Musicals presents

HAIRSPRAY

Based on the 1988 Jon Waters film
Book by Mark O'Donnell and Thomas Meehad,
Music by Marc Shairman
Direction and Choreography
by Matthew McCoy
Musical Director Jon Gallo
MUST CLOSE August 11th
Two hours 30 min one intermission
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Nico and Xun from Vmedia Arts visit with Matt McCoy and some of the cast - opening night at the Victoria Theatre July 6, 2019