

Steadstyle Chicago

November 2009 Theatre Review by Alan Bresloff



Critical
Evaluation



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Plaid Tidings

Once Halloween is over, our thoughts turn to the upcoming holiday season and all the theater lights become "Christmas lights" as all of the old standards come off their shelves and back on the stages of our area theaters. In looking at my upcoming schedule, it seems I have 6 holiday shows each week until the year ends, but like many other theater patrons, I enjoy the standards and even the new, some brand new and some remounted. If you remember the old "Forever Plaid," where a rock 'n roll quartet was lost in an accident, a show that has been running for many years, there is a sequel, one that doesn't play that often. "Plaid Tidings" is more of a holiday show in that the foursome comes back from heaven with a special mission, although they are not certain of what they are to do.



This show has been done a few time in our area and is something different from the standard holiday fare. Pheasant Run's Noble Fool Theatricals has made this their holiday show and has put together a smart production with four talented singers to handle the quartet. The production is designed for an evening of fun and while it puts you into the holiday spirit, it's far more than just a bunch of holiday songs. It is in fact a look at some of the history of music from the 1940's, 50's and 60's with a wonderful salute to the Ed Sullivan Show where they re-enact an entire Christmas Special in just 3 1/2 minutes. This wild and hysterical work is smoothly directed by Bob Kiser.



The four men who compose the "Plaids" possess solid voices with a special flair for comedy. Sparky is played by Robert Deason, who recently showed us some true spark as Willard in "Footloose" at Theatre at The Center in Munster. Frankie, the lead singer is deftly handled by Sean Effinger-Dean, who just finished doing "The Fantasticks" at The Theatre Building for Porchlight. The other two Plaids are played by David Meadows as Smudge, the bass and the marvelous Brad Simanski as Jinx, with a large voice coming from a small tenor. These four players have meshed as a unit and have a sparkling relationship onstage.

"Plaid Tidings" is certainly not a great book with a story line that makes people care, but it is a great 2 hours of entertainment and two hours that will bring back some wonderful memories from days gone by. For younger audiences, perhaps it will be just an experience and a lesson in musical history. Perry Como, Rosemary Clooney (you know, George's aunt), Harry Belafonte, names people under 30 will have no idea about and songs like " Moments to Remember", "Fever", "Kiss of Fire" and of course the great holiday songs, "Let it Snow", "Mr. Santa", "I'll Be

Home For Christmas" and many others. In fact, over 30 songs make this show a wonderful experience for young and old.

While the ride out to beautiful St. Charles for a holiday show might seem kind of strange, it is not as far as one might think and for something this much fun, isn't it worth a little road time? Pheasant Run, home of the Noble Fool, is a resort, not just a theater, with dining spots and a comedy club within its walls. So it might be a great idea to make a day of it, attend the show and have dinner and then enjoy an after dinner treat, all without moving your car. There is loads of free parking on the premises. In fact, they might even have packages that include one of their rooms so you can make the experience even more special.

"Plaid" will run through December 27, 2009. Performances are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 8 p.m. Saturdays at 5 and 8:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m., Wednesday matinees at 2 p.m. on 12/2 and 12/9 and on Thursday 12/3 and 12/10 as well as Friday 12/18 at 10:00 am. This might be the one where a Thursday night sleepover makes sense. Tickets range in price from \$29-\$39 and dinner/show packages at \$49-\$59, a very nice package. Call 630-584-6342 or visit www.ticketmaster.com. The theater/resort is located at 4051 E. Main Street in St.Charles. This is the extension of North Avenue, Route 64. For further info check out www.noblefool.org.

About Alan Bresloff



Alan Bresloff, once an actor himself, has been covering the Chicago Theater Scene since 1993, first as the Theater and Arts critic for LaRaza newspaper, then with Salsachicago.com and then onto Extra Newspaper and The Epoch Times. He also writes for ElImparcial and TeleGuia. His reviews can also be seen on www.theatreinchicago.com. Alan does not call himself a "critic" but a "reviewer" as he tries to educate the reader about theater itself, what is a good value, what to look for in a play or musical and more.

"Exposure to theater is a very important part of a young person's life" he says. "Learning about the arts and culture is in fact learning about life" and he tries to explain more in his reviews than just if it is good or bad. Even some of the poor productions have some value, he often says and he would love your feedback on shows that you have seen.

You can write him here or at albresloff@sbcglobal.net.



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