

"Respect" Society Hill Playhouse Jan. 27 - April 18



Respecting A Girl's Night Out

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T...find out what it means to me." Apparently it means a great deal to women all over the Philadelphia area. Ladies have been flocking to the show "Respect" like pilgrims traveling to Lourdes. And the latest production of the show at the Society Hill Playhouse offers an absolute cure for the winter doldrums.

"Respect" is the brainstorm of author Dorothy Marcic and features a multitude of popular songs. The show celebrates the strides women have made over the years. It features a wide range of popular music from "Someone to Watch Over Me" to "I Will Survive."

The Philadelphia premiere of the show at Act Two Playhouse in Ambler was so wildly successful, that it was extended not once, but twice. Producer and director, Bud Martin, decided to bring it to a larger venue in the city. The new and improved version is just that. The bigger and deeper stage has allowed the production to achieve even higher heights.

Dirk Durossette's set is a major upgrade from the Act Two production because of the added space available to him...and he makes the most of it. The ascending circular steps add a majestic look to the production. The rear projection screen becomes the fifth cast member and adds tremendously to the show. One minute the big screen gets laughs as the cast sings "Johnny Get Angry" and a clever array of men named "Johnny" flashes in front of the audience. Next minute we are treated to a montage of women who have courageously changed the social landscape for the so-called "gentler sex."

While Doroth Marcic's script serves as the time machine, it is the music of the show that powers the engine. The cast is simply excellent. The voices of Danielle Herbert, Lois Sach Binder, and Jennifer Lorae are a wonderful blend. In terms of their looks and roles, no three people could be more different. However, when the three come together in song, those differences melt into intricate harmonies. Listening to the three of them is pure joy.

Danielle Herbert shines in her role, a portrayal that resulted in her being nominated for a Barrymore Award for "Outstanding Leading Actress in a Musical" this past year. Lois Sach Binder returns to the very stage that she starred in "Menopause" for years and continues to delight audiences with her beautiful voice and great comic timing. New Yorker, Jen Lorae brings an incredible stage presence to the production and a voice to match. Newcomer Eileen Matthews plays the narrator and adds an energy that is infectious.

Director Bud Martin has done an exquisite job of getting the most out of his actresses and cleverly navigating through this "musical journey of women," as it is billed. For a man, he apparently gets it. Martin has served as a producer on three Broadway productions this past year and has recently returned from London's West End where he is a producer on the smashingly successful run of "Legally Blonde." Apparently producing agrees with him.

Musical director John Daniels has done a marvelous job with the complex arrangements and enjoys a little onstage moment that endears him to the audience even more.

Make no mistake about it...this is a show ABOUT women and FOR women. Women are the target audience and the show clearly hits its mark. With a stellar cast, the show sings its way through history and you better buckle up for the ride. It is fast, furious, and non-stop.

Narrow-minded males may find themselves allergic to the high level of estrogen in the theater. In fact, men, if your wives or girlfriends ask you to join them on this trip to the theater, this may be the one time in your life that you might think about turning the tables and claiming that YOU have a headache. However, ladies, for you, the “musical journey” is well worth the ride.

Larry Bonafonte