

Wishful Drinking By Carrie Fisher

At the Hippodrome Theatre through February 12

By Kiara Alexander

WAIT, YOU CAN GET TIRED OF LAUGHING?

Perhaps it's been a dream of yours to be a main character in a movie of the science-fiction variety. Carrie Fisher, best known for her role as Princess Leia in George Lucas' "Star Wars" films, has plenty of experience in that field. Her piece, "Wishful Drinking," suggests that perhaps we should follow our dream and then create a one-woman show about it.

The show, currently onstage at the Hippodrome Theatre, becomes hilarious as soon as the houselights go down. An announcer introduces the show reminding us that unfortunately Meryl Streep will not be playing the role of Carrie Fisher. A tiny woman appears with a tiara, wand and basket of glitter and begins glitter-fying audience members. This is all very amusing but gradually the non-stop humor becomes wearisome.

The projection design, a major aspect of the piece, shows newspaper articles with headlines deeming the 55-year-old star of the show a little wacky. She remarks, "I'm very sane about how crazy I am," and the show officially begins moving deeper into the memory of Carrie Fisher. The stories she uses as material come from her own life experiences. In fact, "Wishful Drinking" is the stage adaptation of Fisher's autobiography of the same name first published in 2006. You really don't need to see the show to get to know Carrie Fisher personally for her IMDB page explains her life just as well as she does but without the excessive use of one-liners.

The show is structured more like a stand-up comedy routine than a traditional play; Fisher often breaks her speeches mid-sentence to respond to audience members or perhaps joke about them, proving she is very quick on her toes. There are no recognizable scenes and most information is given to you through word of mouth. This method of communication doesn't ruin the play considerable but mars it a tad. If an audience member looks away for a moment, he'll have to wait until Fisher changes the subject in order to catch up.

Fisher spares no time in making new friends within the show. She starts her new companionship with the audience with an anecdote that isn't so lovely; her friend has died from a drug overdose while in her bed. While the event she describes is anything but pleasant, she makes it so with her encouragement that the incident is in fact funny. Fisher's level of vulnerability during her stories serves to cement the bond she creates with her audience because only friends know each other's drug problems or mental instabilities.

Whenever Fisher asks the audience a question, the house lights partially come up and she looks out expectantly until the first person has the guts to yell something to her. The star keeps the show lively by responding to each question in real time. This adds some intimacy between the audience and Fisher, heck, you can call her Carrie. Within the atmosphere she creates she teases any audience member she can spot from on stage and she continuously turns to them whenever she becomes tongue-tied or needs help to relay an idea.

One tangent begins with a story to the audience concerning her daughter, and her daughter's fiancé. This abruptly moves on to Hollywood Inbreeding 101, a class that Fisher offers to the audience so they can better understand the overlapping relationships of celebrities.

There was no smooth transition to the classroom and audience members are forced into understanding where the actress is trying to take them and this is because Fisher sometimes falters. She'll begin a sentence one way and end it in a completely new direction, confusing her audience. Hollywood Inbreeding 101, with its vast information is a perfect example of this. The segment starts with a board coming down from the ceiling with pictures of her parents as well as their other partners and all their offspring.

It's a very confusing cast of characters and Fisher doesn't take that into account when she begins her lecture on old Hollywood dating. She speaks very fast and continues with jokes about these people she connects to with herself. To start off her class, she compares her mother, Debbie Reynolds, to Jennifer Aniston, her father, Eddie Fisher, to Brad Pitt, and her former stepmother, Elizabeth Taylor, to Angelina Jolie. She assumes her audience, at some moments, knows more than they do. She does make some analogies to engage younger audience members but few analogies follow after her Bradifer to Bradgelina one.

The most famous stars in pop culture, famous for being part of the back story given at the beginning of every "Star Wars" movie, appear as projections on stage. R2-D2 doesn't miss the sci-fi fun either and makes appearances on stage in several places in several forms, stuffed being the most common. Maybe the decapitated frog head sitting on top of the set's arch is supposed to serve as a fair warning to the audience about the craziness that is about to ensue or maybe the excessive amount of clocks that lay lurking in the background provide that insight.

But the show, after you return to your seat from the intermission, becomes predictable. The curtains rise and there is the woman of the hour, lounging on what looks like a couch from her living room drinking a coke, ready to tell you more silly details of her life. You sigh because you know it's going to be funny and tiring at the same time. Her incessant need to make every life event hilarious drains the room of energy. People begin to lose sight of when to laugh and when not to laugh. To watch the show, towards the end, feels like work.

By far, the most discussed topic during the show was that of Fisher's sanity. When she first presents herself, she has on a tiara in her hair and glitter on face. She then prances off of the stage, barefoot, to merrily share the gift of glitter with the unsuspecting audience. It's not a very conventional way to start a show, but it underscores the most notable feature to Fisher's need to cope through everything with comedy.

As the show presses its message at people—life is funny—the show is perhaps too funny, if that can in fact happen. "Wishful Drinking" is recommended to see for those who dream about Princess Leia a little more than they should. It is recommended for those who want to laugh, laugh and nothing more.

By Laura Ebsworth

CARRIE LOVES AUDIENCE, AUDIENCE LOVES HER

"Wishful Drinking" is like a crazy rollercoaster: waiting in line, riders are anxious and don't know if they should get on. Once on, they want to turn back; then the ride starts and everyone loves it. The ride is full of unexpected twists and turns, and afterwards passengers are wishing it had been longer.

"Wishful Drinking" is all about Carrie Fisher making fun of the crazy life she has had from birth. It is basically the stage version of her autobiography, "Wishful Drinking." She talks about her parents' careers, her careers, their affairs, her affairs, their marriages, her marriages, her daughter, her health issues, and, of course, "Star Wars." Even though she talks about her life as a child, it is not a show kids should be seeing; she quite often cusses to get her point across. It is still an entertaining show and all adults, even teenagers, should go see it at the Hippodrome Theatre before it leaves February 12.

Even though it is a one-woman show, Fisher grasps the audience's attention from the moment she starts until the curtain closes. Whether she's allowing them to ask questions, making fun of one of them or pulling a select few onstage, spectators are on the edge of their seats wondering what will come out of her mouth next. These segments are some of the show's funniest aspects because the way the audience reacts to Carrie and Carrie reacts to them is ever changing.

She is very comfortable on stage and makes herself right at home. During the show, she will be walking around barefoot and drinking whenever she feels like it (it is barely noticeable unless one is adamantly studying her every move). Because of this, she is able to deliver her lines very comfortably and is able to ad-lib when she forgets something (which on opening night was a little too often).

Carrie also dresses very laid-back; throughout the show, her hair is half-up, half-down, she wears a long, loose, three-quarter-sleeved purple button-down purple shirt with black jeans and black sparkly flip-flops (as well as glitter on her face and also a sparkly rhinestone headband in Act 1). If she were to come out wearing a ten-thousand-dollar dress, the audience wouldn't be as comfortable interacting with her because she would look like she's worth a lot more than

them. By dressing in clothes anyone can buy, she effortlessly creates an inviting atmosphere, and the audience consistently responds with roars of laughter, awes of silence and oceans of questions.

The set looks like a cross between an attic and a child's bedroom. Fisher has many props all over the stage, including two R2D2's. In the center of the mayhem there is a window seat and the window turns out to be a huge screen that shows clips and photos when Carrie is talking. Because it comes off as a familiar household area anyone would feel comfortable in, the set makes the audience feel as if they're sitting in Carrie's house having a conversation with her.

There are some mishaps throughout the show. Carrie keeps reiterating that she hasn't done the show in a while (the number of months kept changing as well) and might forget some parts. She then furthers this point by saying if she forgets more parts of her life, she will pull an audience member onstage and they will talk about their lives.

This is a little annoying because in some parts of the show, it appears that she didn't prepare something to say ahead of time and chose to "wing it." If it isn't memory issues, then she doesn't truly grasp that people are paying to see her show and want to feel like she actually prepared to give them what they paid for.

There are some technical issues as well. When the projector behind her is not showing pictures, it changes to a vibrant background that makes it harder to concentrate on what she is saying. Also, she holds her hand in front of her face to an extent that causes her speech to get muffled. It isn't as apparent to people sitting closer, but that is certainly an issue she should fix.

One would think the show is about how Carrie deals with her mental issues, but in reality she only touches on the subject a little - about 10 minutes before the second act ends. When she does talk about his part of her life, it seems as if she is improvising things to tell us. From the synopsis of the show, it is assumed that this would be a key portion of the show; it is unclear if she just forgot to say more on the subject or not.

Carrie keeps you "on your toes" throughout the entire performance and always keeps you guessing what crazy prop or segment she has coming up next. Even though she forgot things in the show, her memory will more than likely get stronger as the show continues to run. Since she does have memory problems, it is doubtful that she performs the same show twice; it would be quite interesting to see it multiple times to test this hypothesis. Either way, "Wishful Drinking" is definitely worth seeing while it's in town.

By Grace Lin

LIVE & LAUGH & LOVE

Hello, and welcome to Carrie Fisher's living room. Or, if you prefer, the living room of Princess Leia from the famous "Star Wars" trilogy. Come enjoy Carrie's company as she takes us all on an under-the-kitchen-sink, trans-galactic journey through her childhood, adulthood and back, all from the comfort of her living room.

If you're shy, don't sit in the front row of the Hippodrome Theatre. Right off the bat, she breaks the ice by treating the audience to a musical number, and by dumping confetti all over a man in the front row. She sets the audience at ease by being open and funny even when she's talking about waking up next to a corpse. Then, like a news conference, Carrie takes questions from the audience, so be sure to bring those. Before you run out the door, stuff a hearty "ha-ha-ha" into your back pocket too.

Throughout the show, Carrie encourages you to use that "ha-ha-ha" often. She dives deep into topics ranging from her recent weight gain and various divorces to her bipolar disorder, exposing all her secrets with humor. Consequently, with her laidback approach and stylistic jokes, you feel transported into the midst of a stand-up comedy routine.

Most people, when they talk about their childhood, speak of cute, funny moments they can laugh about over a cup of hot cider. You might say that Carrie's childhood was somewhat... different. Just to explain her biological parents and their numerous remarriages, the audience is surprised by the first of the night's many interactive set pieces: a family tree complete with headshots on a blackboard.

Here, Carrie dives into the nitty-gritty details of "Hollywood Inbreeding101." She gives a very simple explanation for all those Hollywood divorces and remarriages: the couple falls in love, have "good memories," divorce, but wish to experience those "good memories" again, so they remarry. This joke, humorous the first time, became a lump of over-kneaded dough. It may be fun to squeeze through your fingers, but you regret it when you can't tear a piece off your

tough and way-too-chewy loaf of bread. Although the joke was overdone, give Carrie some credit: it's not her fault her parents had so much fun.

Eventually, she moves on to the film for which she is most famous: "Star Wars." She uses another interactive prop, a screen, to comically show the extent with which society obsesses over the iconic Princess Leia with various types of merchandise, including a life-sized doll. While an arch across the screen blocks a lot of the screen, the arch's changing lights adds to the atmosphere of the show.

In the second act of the show, Carrie moves on to more serious topics, like her addiction and bipolar disorder. Carrie never explicitly states these problems, so audience members unfamiliar with her life may have a hard time following along. Be sure to do your research before coming to the show.

To lighten the mood of the audience, she uses many instances of humor; however, the audience is not as receptive because they're expecting a more serious attitude towards more serious topics. While discussing her bipolar disorder treatments, she makes light of her electric shock therapy by laughing about her "convulsions." Many may be slightly put off by her callousness towards this subject.

The various media add to the production's overall effect. At the very beginning of the show, a planned "feedback" sound to get the audience's attention is effective. However, throughout the show, Carrie moves her hand between her mouth and her microphone, so the sound quality is quite poor and difficult to hear at some times. The fact that she makes little sucking sounds after she drinks distracts the audience from what she is trying to convey to the audience. However, the "feedback" and the various songs still allow the audience to experience a multi-dimensional show.

Although she is very successful in exploring her life with humor, there is no poignant point in the show. The audience expects that after three hours of comedy, a turning point will leave the audience with something to muse over on the drive home. However, the audience is left unfulfilled.

This show is only suited for a very specific target audience. The content is inappropriate for young minds; Carrie's jokes are laced with sex, drugs and alcohol. Also, those who are not interested in Hollywood life and their fanatics would soon become bored as well. The audience must be well trained in the thought school of "Carrie Fisher" to be able to fully enjoy the show.

Even if you don't like all things Hollywood, sit down and relax; you're in for a good laugh. Remember, Carrie said, "You're not here to look at my house, but to hear my furniture." Be prepared for a frank analysis of her life as she takes you into the very heart of American popular culture. You are very cordially invited to spend the evening with Carrie Fischer.

By Tatiana Mullin

Carrie Fisher, otherwise known as Princess Leia from "Star Wars," laid her life out to reveal the real story behind the Hollywood lifestyle she leads. She made sure the whole audience felt comfortable as if she had welcomed you into her own living room for a couple of cocktails and a few humorous stories. She was constantly making eye contact with people in the audience, leisurely walking the stage and sitting in comfortable positions to keep the audience receptive. Moreover, she encouraged people to yell out questions which not only defined the show's purpose but also made the presentation worthwhile

The show allowed Fisher to present her life to the audience in a personal manner which created a more honest performance. She could have done the show through television or the movies, but a live performance at the Hippodrome Theatre showed the truest side of Fisher, even as she admitted to messing up bits and pieces of her performance.

She gave the audience opportunities to ask questions and get an honest but sarcastic response in return. That left an everlasting impression that a TV show or movie never could equal. Throughout the show Fisher picked on a man sitting in the front row and towards the end gave him the opportunity to come up on stage with her and act out a joke. This kept the audience on their toes, never knowing what she might pull out of her hat next.

Fisher began her one-woman show serenading the audience with a surprisingly wonderful voice. She wore a bold, purple blouse with black leggings, along with over-the-top glitter sandals. Mind you, it is winter here in Maryland. Her eye shadow was once again a shade of bright purple topped off with a glitter overlay. Her goal of having all eyes on her was accomplished with just her outfit. Fisher made the audience feel welcomed into her life whether they liked it or not. She was very confident in her ability to tell the audience of her fight with alcoholism and being diagnosed with manic-depression.

As the curtains rose to show a comfortable “living room,” it put the audience in a more relaxed and comfortable state of mind. There were bookshelves in the far back of the stage, with keepsakes and old luggage stacked beside each leather-covered chair. Cluttered yet comfortable. Fisher displayed personal family photos and drank soda while she skipped across the stage.

She came down the aisle sprinkling glitter over random spectators to really get the audience’s attention. Not only did she interact with different members but she was also able to remember the name of every audience member she teased or spoke to during her performance. That element added a more personal touch than a more typical performance.

Fisher’s narrative went through not only her life as an actress in “Star Wars,” but through her life as a person. She shared many personal stories from her childhood and spoke of what it is like to have a daughter of her own. She explained the ups and downs of her parent’s marriage by bringing down a chalkboard named “Hollywood Inbreeding 101.” Her sarcastic sense of humor in the midst of dealing with her parent’s multiple divorces gave the sense that everyone in the Hippodrome that night was equal. Yes, the audience came to see a show, but they were not at all treated like a typical audience.

The one thing that really stood out from Fisher’s performance was that she did not focus on her role as Princess Leia. She made spontaneous jokes about her character here and there, because that is obviously what she is best known for, but she showed an unknown side that not everyone sees in a Hollywood actress. Fisher presented herself as a real, down-to-earth person to the audience. She was almost like a spy presenting information and giving the audience an inside source on how really screwed-up life in the spotlight can be.

Because she had not done the show in a long time, she forgot bits and pieces. Rather than owning it and moving on so the audience would not be able to notice, she pointed it out many times which gave an impression that she did not have full control of her own show. This chopped the show up and created a less smooth appeal from what was expected.

Every time Fisher explained a hardship she suffered or caused herself, she always created a joke about it. For example, she informed the audience that a picture of her was in psychiatry textbook. Rather than a picture of herself it was herself as Princess Leia. So not only is Fisher a manic-depressive, but so is Princess Leia. She was able to laugh at herself and be herself on stage rather than playing someone else.

That is what makes a one-person show so unique. No matter who the person is, you see the real them and hear what they really have to say, rather than who that actor pretends to be or how the media perceives them. It helps people who are not in show business understand that the actors are normal people and go through tough times in their lives but manage to move on like everyone does. Her most important advice she gave about her life to the audience was “It’s not what you are given; it’s how you take it.”

By Madison Nelson

DEPRESSION DEFEATED

When you enter the Hippodrome Theatre, you expect to exit reality and be taken into a whole new world for a few hours. But when you step into the world of Carrie Fisher in her one-woman show, “Wishful Drinking,” based on the best-selling novel, it’s as if you’re having coffee with a good friend. An audience member expects to watch a fairytale come to life, or to pay for a ticket to hear someone’s tales, but Fisher takes the one-woman show up a notch with “Wishful Drinking” by her welcoming, friendly attitude and her power to create a charming atmosphere.

Fisher has not performed the production in several months and even admits she's a tad off during the show, but that doesn't interrupt the flowing rhythm as she opens with her line, "Hi, I'm Carrie Fisher and I'm an alcoholic." This honest opener makes you feel as if though Fisher has nothing left to hide.

She brings the audience into her world by alternating laughter and hard truths about the world she has grown up in. She even gets laughter from her story of a good friend's death or the history of her family's many marriages—and just as many break-ups.

Fisher takes you travelling along the timeline of her life from the stories of her parents, her childhood, her most famous work "Star Wars" and finally the depression and hardships she has experienced from alcohol and drug abuse.

By communicating with the audience and even bringing a lucky member to the stage, Fisher makes her audience feel at ease and laughing from start to finish. She has no problem expressing her feelings and telling the truth about her life, which keeps her mood open and warm. Fisher tends to take the hardest parts of her life and spin them into something to laugh about, rather than let them eat away at her. She opens up about her struggles and triumphs to let you know that she made it and so can you.

However it is not all laughs with Carrie Fisher. In this production she shows not only the funny, light and fabulous parts of her life, but the dark parts as well. Fisher speaks out to her audience about her troubles with addiction, alcohol, and depression towards the end of the show, but adds "It's not what you're given; it's how you take it."

Even then, the audience can't stop laughing along to Fisher's colorful, exuberant tone and attitude on her life and situations. Fisher takes the audience into a production, so you feel as if you are a part of her show, by her asking questions, laughing along with audience shout outs, rather than the audience just watching in their seats.

The production's calm, homey set is a key ingredient to the open mood throughout the show. It doesn't feel as though the audience as walked into a theater; it feels as though you have entered Fisher's home. The stage is filled with couches and memories of Fisher's life; even clever "Star Wars" collectibles and memorabilia. In the background, a flowing screen of pictures of Fisher's family and friends, along with short video clips throughout the show, keeps the audience from getting bored or feeling as if the show is becoming dull.

Fisher never stops moving either, she roams the stage comfortably smoking her electronic cigarette and laughing along with the audience. From the minute the crimson curtains open revealing the comfortable stage, and Fisher's shameless, bubbly personality, the lighting is cool and easy, another reason the mood in the theater is calm and collected.

Throughout the production, Fisher keeps the audience at the edge of their seats and laughing with her bubbly, open attitude but the audience walks away with a little more than just a night of laughter. Fisher helps the audience feel a form of catharsis as she closes with the same song at which she began the show, making the audience members feel as if they have let their stress go for a short while.

In "Wishful Drinking" Carrie Fisher brings the truth of her life and her past to the surface. She shows that she may not have her happy days back again but she has definitely defeated her depression off for a little while, and that she, whether she likes the term or not, is in fact a survivor.

By Abby Salazar

THESE AREN'T THE DROIDS YOU'RE LOOKING FOR

The warmly lit stage depicting a living room is dimmed at the Hippodrome Theatre. A shade of blue illuminates the theater as the starry background gives an outer space feel. In the midst of the galactic setting, a woman in her 50s recites with great eloquence the ever-so-famous monologue, "General Kenobi, years ago, you served my father in the Clone Wars. Now he begs you to help him in his struggle against the Empire... This is our most desperate hour. Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi. You're my only hope."

To her dismay, these lines have haunted this woman's memory for the first 34 years since they appeared in "Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope." She blames "Star Wars" writer George Lucas for permanently planting in her mind the famous holographic monologue, despite her attempts to clear it from her memory. This woman can still recite those

lines perfectly—and so fittingly adds gibberish at the end for comical effect—because she is none other than Carrie Fisher, best known for her role as Princess Leia.

Leia has had her fair share of relationship roller coasters. She gets involved in a love triangle between Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, who she later learns is her brother—after sharing a kiss. But beyond the white gown and trademark bun hairstyle, Fisher has sailed through rough seas in real life as well.

In her one-woman show, “Wishful Drinking,” now at the Hippodrome, she shares her struggles with her alcoholism, her dysfunctional family, her complex relationships, her mental disorders and the like. Although a production about someone's horrible life is might seem very unappealing, Fisher tells her story in such a comical fashion that it is ultimately—and very subtly—inspiring. Her comic take on a seemingly miserable life depicts how it is possible to see life in a positive way no matter how bad things get.

As the curtains open, Fisher boldly sings “Happy Days Are Here Again,” originally performed by Judy Garland and then Barbra Streisand. She pauses mid-song to introduce herself, “I am Carrie Fisher, and I am an alcoholic.” Although the show is expected to mainly focus on her dark past, the cheerful song creates an uplifting mood, disproving that this topic has to be gloomy and hard to enjoy.

Besides the uplifting mood created by the music, the set design mirrors her personality as well. At first glance, the brown leather couches arranged so precisely seem to depict a very plain personality, but beyond the typical living room set are pieces that truly embody the Fisher behind the mask. Things such as the large frog's head on the arch wall, the large catfish figurine in the background, and the tacky backgrounds reflect Fisher's bold and loud personality. Similarly, although she is slightly hunched over in a plain purple button-down shirt and black leggings and walks across the stage as though she is advanced in age, the moment she opens her mouth, it's clear she is the furthest thing from simple and elderly.

Although “Wishful Drinking” is described as a one-woman show, she interacts with the audience so much that everyone seems to be part of the production. Her show opens with a comical take on how her friend passed away six years, nine months and five days before opening night. She encourages the audience to ask her questions about the horrific experience, and she creates her jokes on the spot based off on their responses. Prior to the intermission, one lucky member of the audience joins her on stage, ultimately breaking what is left of the barrier which separates the performer and the audience.

The show's content is aimed at a specific group. In its entirety, it is inappropriate for those of a younger age because of the constant reference to promiscuous sex, drugs, alcohol and the like. Given that Fisher's prime time in the spotlight was decades ago, the show targets those of the middle-age and older even more. The show is also appealing specifically to avid “Star Wars” fans. As she says herself, “If you've never seen 'Star Wars,' then why the hell are you even here?”

In addition, in order to fully enjoy the show, one must have followed Hollywood scandals of the '50s; otherwise, one would have to fake a laugh every time Fisher makes jokes about being raised in the midst of scandal by her celebrity parents, Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher. Her segment called “Hollywood Inbreeding 101” explains everything one needs to know to understand her references to her personal life, so it would have been more effective had she presented it earlier in the show.

Despite the exceedingly specific target audience, Fisher's presentation is still enjoyable to an extent. She satirizes society in general, and her clever play on words would make one chuckle at least a couple of times, so one does not need to be an expert in “Star Wars” or “Hollywood Inbreeding 101” to have a good time.

At some points in the show, the background audio overshadows Fisher's voice; however, the special effects which are used to depict scenes such as a flashback or a mockery of a “Star Wars” scene are so exceptional that it surpasses the flaw. When presenting her segment on “Hollywood Inbreeding 101,” Fisher uses a helpful visual aid: a blackboard with head shots of those concerned. Because of this, it is easier to understand the number of times people in Fisher's life remarry.

While the show would be classified as a comedy, Fisher's positive outlook on her dysfunctional life provides an underlying inspiration that shows people that regardless of how much drama piles on one's life, it is possible to move on and make a mockery out of it. This opens a perspective from which people can focus on the positive aspects of life rather than dwell on the negative ones. Her aphorisms such as “Say your weak words with a strong voice” get the audience thinking, ultimately allowing them to say that they leave the theater with a few laughs and a few words of wisdom.

By Asher Varon

IN A PLAY FAR FAR AWAY... FROM ITS INTENT

“If my life weren’t funny it would be true,” teases the witty and risqué Carrie Fisher, as she introduces the humorous but erratic and exhausting show, “Wishful Drinking.” While the energetic Fisher interacts with the Hippodrome audience, conversationally speaking one-on-one with audience members, the one-woman show fails to convey the life lesson of Fisher’s chaotic Hollywood life.

Instead, the audience becomes entertained by a series of corny stand-up-comedy jokes meant to compensate for the play’s true shallowness. Although engaging, the show lacks clarity and insight and becomes confusing. Neglecting her physical and mental health, Fisher becomes an alcoholic infatuated with her success as she ignores her better judgment.

First a book and then a play, both by Fisher, “Wishful Drinking,” is an autobiographical story, sarcastically illustrating Fisher’s life as an alcoholic, manic-depressive and famous Hollywood actress, all while in the public eye. Created for mature and older audiences, Fisher’s play uses raw humor to satirically portray the “desired” Hollywood life.

Beginning with her parents, Hollywood stars Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds, Fisher describes her dysfunctional family life, before she began her advancing Hollywood career. Staking her claim to fame by assuming the role of Princess Leia, in the classic “Star Wars” trilogy, Fisher speaks of her transformation into a national Hollywood icon.

In one scene, Fisher animatedly describes herself as being represented by everything from shampoos and soaps to even more exotic and disturbing merchandise such as sex dolls. Not only had Fisher’s image been transformed into normal promotional items, but also into America’s sex symbol.

By exposing her entire life with ease, Fisher allows the audience to relive the Hollywood lifestyle from her sardonic point of view. However, Fisher’s life is soon interrupted by her addiction to drinking and uncontrollable manic-depressive mood swings, causing her to make poor decisions. In combination with her public life, Fisher’s troubling private past, which includes not only her fragile mental state but also her doomed love affairs, transforms a Hollywood dream into a nightmare.

This combination of private and public life, although intriguing, often confuses the audience as Fisher changes between her two different perspectives, forcing the audience to view her lifestyle not as participants but as bystanders. If Fisher had instead focused only on her life in the spotlight, would have given the audience a first-person perspective, allowing them to experience Fisher’s thoughts at that moment, but not her entire life. While third-person narrative is usually preferred, to effectively convey Fisher’s life the play should have been written in first-person, providing the audience with unknown aspects of Fisher’s life, making them feel just as Fisher did at the time.

While the play itself attempts to create insight into America’s most highly regarded and commercialized values of celebrity and sex, the show deteriorates from a promising contemplation of society into futility. Instead of condemning society for its false morals and materialistic values, the play embraces society’s beliefs and portrays those values in a sarcastic tone but does not suggest an alternative ideology. Fisher should have used her alcoholism and distraught mental state to demonstrate the effects of America’s societal values.

Although “Wishful Drinking” gives the audience the opportunity to focus on a single celebrity’s Hollywood life story, the play covers up the more important issues of Fisher’s life with distracting details. Redundant and at often times complicated, this show becomes boring and superfluous, as Fisher over-exaggerates both her parents’ “on and off” relationships, spewing name after name into the audience. In one scene, Fisher emphasizes her parents’ superficial lives more than her own.

This disorganization, however, not only applies to the minor scenes, but to major aspects of the show as well. The play fails to portray a clear connection between Fisher’s tumultuous private life and her instantaneous rise to fame, although one should assume that Fisher’s sudden rise to stardom led to her uncontrollable and chaotic life. The show tends to avoid answering the audience’s “why” questions, such as “why did Fisher become an alcoholic” and stifles their curiosity with more racy but meaningless humor.

If the director had attempted to make the show convey a sense of organized chaos to replicate Fisher's life, "Wishful Drinking" would be revered by every critic for its irony. However, "Wishful Drinking" ends up becoming an act on stage without a plot, one which disorients the audience and distorts the play's initial intentions. Like a parent who walks into a child's room complaining it's messy, while the child argues it's neat, "Wishful Drinking's" production was in disarray. Although the director grasps the connection between Fisher's two lives, the audience becomes the parent, unable to understand the play's methodology.

The set similarly possesses artistic and idealistic potential but also suffers from its presentation. From the audience's perspective, the stage represented a cluttered room, containing a sofa and a lounge chair, surrounded by vintage suitcases and arbitrary memorabilia, varying in size. In the very beginning of the show, however, the plush-covered walls of an insane asylum are projected onto the set's rear screen.

This ambiguous backdrop conveys the insanity of Fisher's life, both literally (Fisher's manic depression) and figuratively. The suitcases, although disregarded by the audience, represent Fisher's past, as if each memory were locked up in a different bag. The heavier burdens, such as alcohol addiction and manic depression, which leave permanent marks, are stored in the bigger suitcases. However, the set's avant-garde notion of trapped memories, was poorly conveyed to the audience, whose quick glimpse of the set's true nature was overshadowed by the rest of the play.

The one part of "Wishful Drinking" that was not only commendable but worth a standing ovation was Fisher herself. The humorous and personable actress, vivaciously expresses her life in a sarcastic but realistic attitude, capturing the audience's full attention. While the play itself delivers a complex and confusing message, Fisher's phenomenal performance overall enralls the audience with her varying tones and comical one-liners.

When Fisher interacts with the audience it's as if the audience experiences the exact same thing. In one scene, Fisher picks an audience member to come up to the stage and act alongside herself. When the audience member steps onto the stage, Fisher shares the limelight of her life in detail, coercing the audience member to put on the Princess Leia wig and act as though he were Fisher herself.

"Wishful Drinking" overall is a disorganized and a sadly misguided production but still does not leave the crowd disappointed, for Fisher's comical stance on life resonated with the audience's emotions. Although the show demonstrates an incoherent plot, Fisher's last monologue summarizes the show's true intent. As Fisher concludes the show, she responds to her life's misfortunes, stating that some people "try to get to heaven by backing away from hell." For Fisher this is certainly not the case as she has been to hell and back, exclaiming that to succeed one must not fear the consequences of their choices, but rather embrace them.

By Karina Watson

LIVING VI-CARRIE-OUSLY

When one hears the words, "one-woman show," one might be apprehensive since the task of capturing an audience with a full ensemble is hard enough. Yet when Carrie Fisher sat down on her leather chair, a few scenes into her "Wishful Drinking" show at the Hippodrome Theatre, it was obvious that the one woman-show had risen to a new level. As she sipped her soda, smoked a mechanical cigarette and invited the audience to join her on a visual journey through her past, she made an unforgettable, immediate connection with each individual.

A woman with a career as spectacular as Fisher's may seem intimidating. Yet somehow she flowed with her words as if she were talking to a few old friends. She sat back, laughing and enjoying herself, and kicked off her shoes. This made the audience feel so comfortable and respected. This aspect alone created a relaxed yet highly enthusiastic atmosphere.

The audience was constantly anticipating her next word, and she sure delivered; she was so at ease within her own skin. She portrayed a strong woman who has learned to laugh at all the chaos life throws her way, even as she talked about her parent's marriage troubles and her own.

When an actor steps before an audience, it becomes their job to capture the audience's attention. Fisher put enough energy out that it filled the room, and it became impossible for one to take their eyes away. She came off as relatable, and was able to make any one in the room, no matter who they were, feel acknowledged.

Overall "Wishful Drinking" told a story within Fisher's non-fiction, casual script. It may seem like Fisher was born into fame because her parents were actress Debbie Reynolds and singer Eddie Fisher, but she certainly had more than 15 minutes of fame when "Star Wars" put her on the map at only 19 years old. After that she went on to put out movies such as "The Blues Brothers" in 1980, to releasing books such as "The Best Awful" in 2004.

Behind her jokes about her past and her fame, lay the truth that none of it came easily. Between relationship issues, which seemed to be in her genes, to trying to cope with alcohol, it was easy to see that it all only made Fisher stronger. Her bipolar disorder was mainly joked at and only thrown into tiny parts of selected scenes, but it was done that way because her disorder does not define her.

The pictures of Fisher's parents flashed upon the screen beneath the mounted frog head and small light bulbs which kept changing color. Her bold personality shined through as she recounted old memories. It was as if she were watching a movie for the first time and enjoying every scene.

Even though the relaxed mood had already been set, energy surged through Fisher's veins with every word. It was relaxing to sit back and enjoy such a lively performance, but impossible to not be engaged due to the live energy on stage. She paced, stood her ground and sat back over the course of her story. She engaged with the audience and certainly broke the fourth wall.

She attacked any question that was asked or any response from the audience, either laughter, applause or intrigued silence, with a strong burst of energy. When asked about the man who died sleeping next to her, "Did he pee in your bed when he died?" she was neither confused nor taken aback, as one might expect. Instead Fisher simply smiled and knowingly responded by calling the audience member a little psychotic.

Although one may have felt misled when Fisher focused on a more comic plot, she sought to please and looked for the bright side of every situation. She didn't dwell in the shadows of her past because that's not who she is now. She came into the theater to show that she's made it and to entrance every individual in the room.

There was nothing more captivating than the set which held an adorable element in every nook and cranny. There was a continuous story going on, even in Fisher's silence. Between R2D2 dolls, ceramic hand sculptures, various wall clocks, picture frames, stuffed birds, a bird cage, leather furniture with colorful blankets and beautiful luggage arrangements, the eye was never bored. It was as if the audience could learn everything they needed to from the stage.

Each prop and furniture piece was placed in a given spot, to create a messy yet interesting visual. One could relate with the chaos of a room, but there was also the coziness. That combination portrayed Fisher's attitude, especially when Fisher explained her chaotic break up with Paul Simon, or the happy birth of her daughter Billie. As she moved from couch to couch and the background screen changed, so did Fisher's relationships and the mood shifts throughout her life. It was as if she said, "Come and see every part of who I am."

The props and set also incorporated Fisher's strong sense and love for humor. As she drifted off into her parents' past, she realized that figures such as Eddie Fisher and Elizabeth Taylor might not be recognizable to younger audience members. To proceed with her story of explaining the family tree to her daughter Billie, she used a giant blackboard to explain to the audience as well.

As if the audience hadn't laughed enough, a blackboard with pictures of Carrie's ancestors lowered and it was entitled "Hollywood Inbreeding 101." The audience went into a frenzy, and Fisher used her wand-like stick to point to and explain every relationship scheme being displayed with fancy arrows and pictures of past celebrities.

Another interesting aspect of this production was Fisher's costume. From the second the curtain rose, there was a classy youthfulness to her. Her purple button-down, black skinny jeans and bedazzled flip-flops were very welcoming and eye-catching. She didn't feel the need to make herself too glamorous or ostentatious because obviously she has the career to do the talking. She wore an adorable pearl beaded headband and colorful bracelets to further the mood of relaxed togetherness.

As she told her tale, Fisher encouraged each one of us to sit back, laugh, identify, sympathize and find strength in a bad circumstance. Her hair sparkled and glistened with rainbow glitter from when she opened the show by throwing glitter on herself and audience members. However, she didn't need the sparkles to prove that she shined.

By Diamond Jones

A WOMAN'S INTRUIGING LIFE

As everyone waited anxiously for the play to begin, singing echoed off the Hippodrome Theatre walls. The curtains opened and on stage appeared Carrie Fisher in black pants and a purple, button-up blouse. Fisher, best known for playing Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars," played herself in "Wishful Drinking," a memoir presented as a one-person play.

As the play began, we were led to believe that Fisher was going to talk non-stop about an uninteresting life. Although this was a one-person play, different characters and personalities were introduced, even if there was only one person on stage the whole play. And once you started to laugh you could never stop.

"Wishful Drinking" is usually described as a one-person play, but in reality it's a stand-up comedy routine. Usually in a stand-up comedy, the comedian is on stage with a chair, microphone and something to drink. In "Wishful Drinking", Fisher sat on a couch, talked into a microphone, and had a drink for when her mouth became dry.

A comedian's job is to make their audience laugh. Isn't that what Fisher was doing as she walked around on stage telling her life story as a series of jokes? Fisher's job is quite similar to Kevin Hart's. Both of them tell stories of their life to an audience to make them laugh, but yet "Wishful Drinking" is a play.

Not many people would be able to tell a devastating story about their life without showing any painful emotion. But after everything she has been through, Fisher was able to turn her life into a comedy, proving that laughing off your pain can be the best thing for letting go of every painful thought.

By singing a song to start the play, Fisher caught everyone's attention immediately as if she was a cat who had caught their tongue. The theater grew very quiet and the only voice you heard was Fisher's. As she sang, she walked into the audience and sprinkled glitter on a married couple in the first row. To grab the audience's attention, the first thing she spoke about was waking up next to a dead body—and not just any old body, but her gay best friend's body. It's not normal for someone to wake up lying next to a dead body, but Carrie didn't seem concerned with being normal.

Fisher was born October 21, 1956, in Beverly Hills, California, the daughter of singer Eddie Fisher and actress Debbie Reynolds. Carrie Fisher dated the musician Paul Simon, from 1977 until 1983, before their marriage and after their divorce. Fisher soon had a daughter by Bryan Lourd, who soon left her for another man. Although many women find it depressing to learn that they not only dated a gay man but also had a daughter with one, Fisher was able to turn this story into another joke.

A life-size doll of Fisher as Princess Leia has been made for sale, and to find out if the doll is heterosexual or not, she asked Frank, the same guy she had sprinkled glitter on, to come on stage. As soon as he walked on stage, she asked him to show everyone his penis. Luckily, she was only kidding. Frank didn't show his penis but was awarded with a wig that Princess Leia wore in "Star Wars."

Fisher believed that because she had an interesting and crazy life, she should share it with everyone. Not everyone is born famous, dates a gay man and has a daughter by him. It's not something you would see on an everyday basis. Fisher has many stepmothers, was invited to a psychiatric hospital and woke up in another hospital having had her stomach pumped out for overdosing on so many painkillers and cocaine. Not to mention that she woke up in the same bed with a dead body lying next to her. Who wouldn't think that's interesting, crazy, and worth sharing?

Throughout the play, she often connected with the audience. After the audience had asked her questions like in the beginning, she turned around and asked them questions about their everyday feelings. Many people raised their hands and laughed as they noticed that they weren't the only ones who felt that way everyday.

Many of the audience members could relate to Fisher's life because everyone has their ups and downs. Everyone has their days when they feel ugly, don't want to talk to anyone or just feel depressed. Fisher isn't the only person that has been through a lot of crazy and heartbreaking days. She ranted about the size of her body comparing it to a house and furniture. Many people go through weight issues everyday.

Despite the show's overall success, there were some flaws. Even though it was exactly two hours long, it felt like more. She looked up at the screen that was in the center of the theater because she repeatedly forgot what to say next. She also stuttered and went back to certain stories because she kept forgetting certain details.

Despite these flaws, "Wishful Drinking," is one of the most hilarious memoir plays you could ever see. Fisher connected with the audience numerous times to the point where they didn't feel like strangers anymore. She even remembered some of the audience members' names, such as Frank, and gave them hugs and kisses.

The Addams Family: A New Musical Comedy

**By Marshall Brickman, Rick Elice and Andrew Lippa
At the Hippodrome Theatre through March 18**

By Kiara Alexander

THE ADDAMSES AIM TO PLEASE

"Snap-snap, snap-snap" is heard as the house lights dim and young and old alike quickly adjust their popcorn and twizzlers in their laps. A variety of people have come from near and far to the musical adaptation of "The Addams Family" at the Hippodrome.

Unlike a "Twilight" or "Harry Potter" movie that simply recreates the story told in the novels, this musical's writers do their own interpretation of the family but stay true to the creepiness of the original characters. All design aspects follow this style as well. The characters wear their signature outfits with a 21st-century spin. Wednesday continues to wear a black dress, but it's a dress that can be found in your favorite clothing store. The newness allows the characters to stay relevant. They don't fade into the past; they keep up with the times. Stressing over whether your favorite character would be butchered becomes irrelevant once the show truly begins.

The show centers on the romance blooming between Wednesday Addams (Cortney Wolfson) and Lucas Beineke (Brian Justin Crum) who plan to wed. As a result, the two families must meet which sparks the conflict that will keep the audience on their seats for the rest of the night. Lucas is the child of Mal, a workaholic who doesn't enjoy the finer things in life, and Alice, an admirer of the color yellow. Their names combined (Malalice or Malice) is the only thing that the Addamses would find acceptable, but Wednesday asks for one night of normalcy. Normalcy, however, is not achieved thanks to Pugsley (Patrick D. Kennedy) who slips a strange liquid into the wrong cup.

Rebellious teens are a common occurrence in life and the Addamses have one too. It's entertaining for the audience members because it isn't their daughter who's running off to wed some guy who is a tad too different; it's the Addamses. If you're not a parent with offspring intent on completely graying your hair then surely, perhaps you have gone through a stage of purple hair yourself. Either way, you have a reason to watch and to keep watching.

There are typical family problems present: dealing with in-laws (or soon-to-be-in-laws), raising your kids properly and finding out you're just like your mother, except the Addamses are anything but typical. They shout this message to you at the beginning of the show with the song, "When You're an Addams." The colorful characters are what distinguish this show from a made-for-TV movie that would appear on Lifetime Network.

The main storyline is cliché: a girl goes against her family's rules to be with a boy she adores. Some of the more intimate moments cause us to forget we're watching a comedy not a melodrama but the actors never forget. When

Wednesday tells her mother, Morticia, Lucas is willing to die for her, they squeal simultaneously before talking about the important decisions to be made once more. There is always a moment to draw you back to the laughter through their actions and exaggerations.

The biggest star of the show is by far Douglas Sills with his larger-than-life interpretation of Gomez. His high energy never falters, and he brings the audience up with him. He states every word clearly, allowing all his jokes to be heard, which is not a given in this ensemble. During the song "Waiting," sung by Alice Beineke (Crista Moore), the words are incomprehensible making it difficult to tune in. Sills is the opposite.

Uncle Fester (Blake Hammond) has a similar effect on the audiences. He serves as the show's narrator and takes us where we need to go. But he isn't just restricted to this one role, for he also has a separate storyline of his own: an infatuation with the moon and a trip to court her. At the end of the first act he notices that the show could very well be over soon, so after deliberation with the audience he orders up a storm to keep the story unresolved. His ability to move in and out of reality serves pretty useful, and his asides create a level of intimacy between the show and the audience.

Because Sills' and Hammond's interpretations of their characters are so exceptional, however, the other performers are not as memorable. This can be seen in Wolfson's impression of Wednesday. Due to the numerous productions of "The Addams Family," there is no set way to play Wednesday, but Wolfson doesn't have much in the personality department and changes personas often. One scene she's torturing her brother; the next scene she's wearing a yellow dress while whining. Playing creepy, tortuous or like an Addams just came out normal. Wolfson's Wednesday could find herself the main character of a Lifetime movie

All in all, "The Addams Family" serves as a refreshing experience to add to the collection of turbulent ones you keep in your experience vault. It deals with common family problems in a comedic, very memorable way. It teaches you lessons about having romantic relationships with the moon. It teaches you how meddling can save the day and it teaches you that daughters, no matter how hard they try not to, end up like their mothers.

By Laura Ebsworth

SCRIPT CONTAINS ALL PROBLEMS...AGAIN

"Was rehab right for Charlie Sheen?" asks a character in "The Addams Family." That might never be known. What is known is that the Hippodrome Theatre has discounted its tickets for the show for a very good reason.

The show starts and ends with the famous theme song from the TV series and it includes all of its beloved characters, but other than that the Addams Family vibe is lost amidst the script's cliché plot, theme and morals. The production attempts to incorporate the "creepy and kooky" feel from the cartoon, movies and show but it falls short. The unusual family that America fell in love with turns into a normal family that merely enjoys wearing dark clothing and owning rare yet disturbing oddities.

This is upsetting because the strange yet captivating vibe that the TV show emitted is the reason the show was as popular as it was. The lack of character development and originality in the new musical's script, which erases that vibe, is why it isn't worthy to be related to the original franchise. Despite this, the new musical can still be pleasant, and if anyone wishes to see it, "The Addams Family" will be at the Hippodrome Theater until March 18. However, if anyone expects to see a live version of the TV show, they will leave disappointed.

"The Addams Family" tells the story of two kids, Wednesday Addams (Cortney Wolfson) and Lucas Beineke (Brian Justin Crum), falling in love with each other despite the fact they are from different upbringings. The two decide they want to get married, and plan on telling their families this over dinner at the Addamses' house.

The talent in the cast is astounding; every single lead has a breathtakingly gorgeous voice and great acting abilities, but in many cases the script does not allow these all-stars to perform to their full potential. Douglass Sills (Gomez Addams) has many moments full of creepiness and Latin charm; he has thick eyebrows that allow him to have a multitude of facial expressions. Dressed in a way that makes him appear proud and appealing, Sills plays Gomez with a certain vulnerability that makes his audience like him from the start.

If the script and songs had given more depth to Gomez's kooky side, Sills could have definitely risen to the occasion and created a stellar portrayal. For example, the opening song, "When You're an Addams," is supposed to introduce the audience to the unusual family and their traditions/habits. Instead, it presents Gomez as just a normal Spanish man when he should become an eerie yet inviting figure that still keeps true to his Spanish heritage.

The script also hinders Sara Gettelfinger (Morticia Addams). This actress has a magnificent singing voice and she can clearly act out scenes/songs to audiences. Unfortunately, she cannot use half of it because a maternal attitude is the only angle the script gives her to play. Moreover, Gettelfinger is not the right person for the part. Morticia is known as being a frail, skeleton-like figure that looks about 30-40 and Gettelfinger does not fit this bill. In the Morticia costume, she looks much older than she does in her program headshot, yet her voice sounds like she is in her late 20s. She would be much better in a different role, such as Elpheba in "Wicked."

As Uncle Fester, Blake Hammond brings the house down in many instances. His character, along with Lurch (Tom Corbeil) and Grandma (Christy Morton), are the only ones that stay very close to the Addams Family franchise. Uncle Fester is bald with dark circles around his eyes, wears his familiar black gown, and has a zealous yet amiable nature about him. Hammond's numerous jokes that reference to current events, such as Charlie Sheen, keep the audience engaged and laughing. In his big number, "The Moon and Me," Fester declares his love to the moon and floats up into the night sky to be with "her." From this, he successfully provides the comic relief the show needs in order to distract the audience from the stale plot before them.

As Alice Beineke, Crista Moore has the most stage presence in the entire cast. She does not out-perform anyone in the cast, but her acting and movements are tremendous. This is very important in theater because if the actor's movements are smaller, the people in the seats farthest back cannot see them and therefore do not fully experience the show. Moore's voice is beautiful in all of her songs, especially in "Waiting," the song that tells the audience of her yearning for the relationship between her and her husband to go back to the way it used to be. In this song, her wonderful emotion in combination with her voice transports the audience to Alice's world and allows them to take in her inner struggles. Moore is also able to successfully vary her character from an uptight mother to a cool, laid-back woman as the plot unfolds.

The music was entertaining and fun to listen to. Catchy songs like "When You're an Addams," "Full Disclosure" and "Just Around the Corner" lodge themselves inside the audience's heads for the rest of the night. Even though the score is entertaining, some of the songs don't mesh together into the storyline as well as they should. An example of this is "Pulled," sung by Wolfson and Pugsley (Patrick D. Kennedy), which tells of how Wednesday's love interest is changing her. Though Kennedy's screams are incorporated as part of the accompaniment in the song, and it comes off very choreographed rather than spontaneous.

This is disastrous in the theater world because it ruins the illusion the whole cast has been striving to create throughout the entire performance. Songs, movement, dialogue and dance are supposed to seem as if the characters are doing this for the first time. If this is lost, everything else every character has done previously has been ruined. The worst part of the song is that it alters Wolfson's character. It takes her away from the suspicious and fascinating Wednesday and momentarily turns her into a normal child that is experiencing love for the first time.

The set looks very cool. There are a lot of backdrops instead of legitimate walls, but this is only because it is a traveling show and the sets need to be easily installed and removed. The Addamses' house is fitting; it looks as if it is slightly rotting and very old. The many trees paired with luminous shadows and eerie colors all work together to instigate the dark and wonderful forest environment. This set piece is also remarkably versatile since it employs many of the settings for at least half of the scenes in the show. Different trees can be brought on and off, and different atmospheres can be created instantly with the use of props such as tombstones.

Despite the production's many setbacks, the actors are able to pull through and deliver a fun show that any audience would like. Although the ensemble (and some of the leads as well) is consistently off-center and poorly spaced in dance formations, the average audience member will not be distracted by it. Iconic characters from the TV show, such as cousin IT, can be seen in little tidbits of the show. The tickets for the show have been reduced to \$20 each, which is definitely a more appropriate price.

By Grace Lin
HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

Once upon a time, there lived a girl in a house, happily with her family. As she grew older, she met a young man and fell deeply in love. So deeply, in fact, that they decided to get married. When the two families first meet, they instantly did not get along, and forbade this marriage. Consequently, the two young lovers eloped, but one of them chickened out. At the end of the story, the parents finally gave their blessing, and the both families lived happily ever after.

This sounds like the perfect fairy tale, yes? Take that plot, and add in all the gory, gruesome, ghastly jokes about death and destruction that you can think of. Then perhaps you should not bring your five year old to the Hippodrome Theatre to see "The Addams Family."

However, a slightly older audience will fully appreciate the entire show, from its dissonant harmonies to its cartoon-like set. From the obvious picture to the small details, it is evident that every aspect has been tweaked to produce the highest comical effect. A very successful adaptation of Charles Addams' comics, this show takes his theme of fairy tale and horror to a whole new level with dynamic characters and intricate scoring.

Meet the Addams family: Gomez Addams, a beloved father and husband who would never lie to his wife or his daughter. Morticia Addams, a wife who would stand by her husband until he lies to her. Uncle Fester, the story's beloved narrator who's in love with the moon. Grandma, who—well, why isn't she dead yet? The adorable Wednesday Addams, whose only wish is to be "normal." Pugsley, the youngest Addams member, who would try anything to keep his sister at home so she can torment him until the end of eternity. And Lurch, the speechless butler, who serves them well.

Throughout the show, the actors ironically bring the show to life through their morbid jokes and dead ancestors. They have completely enveloped their parts to the point that one only sees the character and not the actor. However, acting, in and of itself, is not enough. Onstage, these performers have a sort of quiet understanding; they move in a way that complements and doesn't dominate. By supporting each other on the stage, the gruesome details in the dialogue or the lyrics are more prominent.

The actors are so convincing that when they break the fourth wall and make allusions to other plays or actors, the audience is startled. At the end of Act I, when people are screaming and upset, Uncle Fester, as an aside to the audience, comments, "You don't think we're going to end the first act like this, did you?" Later, Fester asks "Was rehab right for Charlie Sheen?" and Grandma, Pugsley and Lurch leave the stage singing goodbye to the tune of "Farewell" from the "Sound of Music." These touches enhance the show by connecting the show with reality so it's not just a stand-alone work of art.

Such unexpected surprises work to the production's benefit. The dancing tassels on the curtain grab the audience's attention before and after an act, drawing laughs when a much larger tassel comes out to help the smaller tassel back on the curtain. At curtain call, the tassels return after the actors completely have wrapped up the show.

Other unexpected little things just fully fleshed out the show. When Uncle Fester launches himself at his distant girlfriend, a puppet Fester is seen flying up towards the moon in the background. Unexpectedly, the moon then turns into Fester's smiling face. Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects is when Lurch opens his mouth to sing at the end of the show. The audience is finally treated to a nice low bass vocal and Lurch's nice smile. These fairytale-like quality surprises help accent the mix of fairytale-like qualities with horror and provide a reprieve to an otherwise depressing story.

For a musical to be successful, the principals as well as the ensemble must be able to sing and act and dance. In this performance, the high notes rang clearly and the low notes resonated. The acting was on spot, and the unique choreography enhanced the vividness and enticed the audience further into the plot.

Superficially, one can see that there are a myriad of characters. At a closer look, however, one sees that all the characters juxtapose each other which add to the fullness of the musical. For example, the Morticia Addams juxtaposes Alice Beineke in that she is very independent and speaks her mind. Wednesday also juxtaposes Lucas Beineke because her carefree approach to "just do it" and courage overshadows Lucas's last minute timidity about getting married.

At the bird's eye view, one may see the plot as perfectly suitable for all ages, the typical G-rated fairy tale. However, what makes this show unique is what makes this show unsuitable for young children: the morbid jokes and the deathly puns. Be prepared to laugh, but maybe also to cry at the show's most poignant moments. One will not be disappointed to see this show, and neither would Charles Addams.

By Tatiana Mullin

FANTASTICALLY DONE MUSICAL

“The Addams Family” musical did a fantastic job overall of transplanting the original “Addams Family” movies and cartoons to the stage of the Hippodrome Theatre. The old gothic feel of the theater blended nicely with that of the set’s dark graveyard. It made the audience feel as though the whole theater were the Addamses’ home as we watched a story play out.

The Hippodrome even went as far as decorating the lobby of the theater with cobwebs and cemetery stones. That added a whole new level of anticipation for the audience. Everything had a sense of celebration because the story is such a classic family message of love and honesty behind the Addamses’ morbid and dark humor.

This combination of a weird-looking family with nonetheless normal family morals had the power to touch any of us no matter how strange or normal we think we are. It brought the audience down to an even level. Every family has its own weird traditions, but deep down inside there’s the same message of love and honesty.

The Addamses may be known for wearing dark colors in celebration of the dead, for it is their tradition. But when Wednesday wanted to impress her fiancé’s family she wore a yellow dress, and when his family arrived his mother was wearing the same color. For some people it’s what is on the outside that matters, but for the Addamses’ it’s what’s on the inside.

The storyline’s overall theme of love made sense to not only the people who have seen every “Addams Family” media production available, but even to those few who may have missed out on such a great childhood memory. The Addams Family has always been known for their crazy odd manner of doing things, which was shown with their morbid costuming and their variety of body parts that show themselves throughout the show. The original message of keeping true to one’s self oneself helped the people who are just hearing of the “Addams Family” understand what the family is truly all about.

The story began with Wednesday wanting to marry a “normal” guy at a very young age. She told only her father because she knew her mother would be very embarrassing about it all, which touches on the classic occurrences in any family. Pugsley was upset because when Wednesday is in love she no longer tortures him all the time. Rather than loving the death of things she began to love flowers and to wear the color yellow (which is forbidden in the Addamses’ home.) Her love for death was fading because she wanted to be normal for Lucas. Her family knew that Wednesday was only acting this strange way because she was overcome by his normalcy and tried to bring her back to their own normal.

Wednesday’s significant other, Lucas, and his parents were invited to the Addamses’ home for dinner to get to know each other. Things went from bad to worse as the families found each other to be complete opposites. His family was the suburban, colorful clothing wearing, small talk about the weather, “normal” family, while the Addamses were the complete opposite. In the end there was overall acceptance of their differences because they have the love of their children that brings them together through an eerie matrimony.

Gomez and Fester were the most well-done characters in the entire show. The actors did a fantastic job of portraying the characters’ humor and personality from the television show. The jokes both of the characters were given really hit the audience in the funny bone. Gomez’s exaggerated Spanish accent stayed true to the original character. It was obvious that the actors did their research on the original characters and portrayed them most accurately.

Throughout the entire show there was a sense of wholesome laughter and happiness. The show did a wonderful job of creating that by taking the audience back to those crazy times that occur with everyone’s family. The show brought everyone down on one level; it made them realize that a family is never completely normal and that all the weird things that happen should be embraced and not hidden behind a mask.

By Madison Nelson

ADDAMS FAMILY BRINGS DEATH TO LIFE

When you're an Addams you're entitled to dark humor, a morbid personality, a creepy old house and probably the most abnormal family in history. But Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, who wrote the book for "The Addams Family" now playing at the Hippodrome Theatre, have turned the tables and brought a dose of young love into the darkness. That's right, little Wednesday has grown up and fallen in love. But here's the problem; she has fallen in love with a NORMAL boy.

Andrew Lippa, who wrote songs with Elice and Brickman to create characters and passionate songs that bring this unlikely mix of darkness and love to life to keep the audience laughing. They spin the idea of "The Addams Family" and turn it into a hilarious comedy about something every family dreads--a girl's first love. They bring her passion to life as well as her dark family's uneasiness with it all. Their jokes and subtle hints throughout the show make the dreaded experience seem real and animated.

The show begins with the Addams Family celebrating the dead (which most families do) by bringing their ancestors alive (which most families don't) to the opening song "When You're An Addams." While the chemistry between Sara Gettelfinger and Douglass Sills, who star as Morticia and Gomez Addams, may be a tad off, their voices bring the show to life. The choreography and songs blend well and flow to an easy rhythm that anybody can enjoy. Sills brings a different kind of life to the stage with his morbid tone; he constantly has the audience laughing in their seats and he keeps the morbid humor that makes an Addams an Addams.

The show's main conflict emerges after the first song, Uncle Fester explains to the ghostly, dancing ancestors surrounding him that Wednesday has fallen in love. And they must help to make sure it succeeds because she hasn't just fallen in love with any boy. He's the type of boy she likes to torture (as girls do). However, there is another conflict. Wednesday has asked her father to keep her love for her new fiancé a secret from her darling mother Morticia, and suddenly the show spins into a mix of truth and lies, keeping each audience member thinking: What will happen next?

Wednesday (Courtney Wolfson) has a complex role: she must portray a mixture of girly fun contorted by a dark humor that keeps an audience laughing. Her mood swings from wanting to torture her brother to wanting to kiss her boyfriend Lucas Beineke should remind any woman of their teenage years and young love. Wolfson brings a modern twist to the show when she explains her feelings in the pop-rock tune "Pulled." The song is upbeat and fun, clearly stating Wednesday's love for Lucas and how it's changing her for the better. Wolfson doesn't miss a beat throughout the song and keeps the rhythm flowing with her easy, bubbly voice. She brings Wednesday's irrational behavior to life throughout the show, which easily keeps it upbeat and alive.

However, a huge part of what makes the show so on point is the technical production. The lights, the set and even the sound do not have one glitch throughout the show; the set is constantly ready and the music easily flows without a problem. While the technical production may be outstanding, the set itself is rather simple. If not for the characters' lively personality and hilarious comedy throughout the show, one would have been easily bored with the simple set and lighting.

As the show goes on, we are introduced to the Beinekes, a simple, easy-going American family. They wear bright colors, and Alice Beineke (Crista Moore) makes inspirational rhymes and Mal Beineke (Martin Vidnovic) complains about almost everything. Naturally, the Addamses think the Beinekes are delusional. However, the two families play nice for the kids until dinner where we hit our climax right before intermission. Pugsley Addams (Patrick Kennedy) doesn't agree with his sister growing up and falling in love. So at dinner he slips a truth serum into a drink to stir up a commotion, but the cup is given to Alice instead of Wednesday and everything blows to pieces.

Suddenly all the couples are arguing. Morticia discovers that Gomez has been keeping Wednesday's secret from her; Lucas and Wednesday argue over their different ways, and Alice and Mal miss the people they used to be. In the end, both families learn a valuable lesson: No family is normal and all families have quirks. But they love each other just the same.

Because of the morbid characters, modern comedy and the wonderful soundtrack, "The Addams Family Musical" should be considered a success. The cast and writers have brought to life a family that couldn't be any more dead, and used juxtaposition to show that even the most normal family is also strange.

By Abby Salazar

DEFINE NORMAL

One of the things teenagers dread the most is having to introduce their significant other to their “crazy” families. They would plead, “Please act normal,” but people like Grandma Addams (Pippa Pearthree) from the Hippodrome Theatre’s production of “The Addams Family” would respond with, “Define normal.”

In this show, two families meet for dinner and play a game called “Full Disclosure.” The participants must state a secret about themselves, and we soon learn that no matter how normal a family may seem, they will always have a crazy side. Through the use of vivid characterization, interpretive music and realistic set design, the story of the forbidden love between Wednesday Addams (Cortney Wolfson) and Lucas Beineke (Brian Justin Crum) is brought to life in the successful musical comedy as their two families redefine the word “normal” and show how something good can come out of being different.

Wednesday’s definition of normal is her boyfriend, Lucas, and his family. Unlike her macabre-obsessed family dressed in gothic clothing, the Beinekes stroll around New York City in bright colors as Alice Beineke (Crista Moore) quotes inspirational passages and speaks in rhyme. Mal Beineke (Martin Vidnovic) is disgusted by the design of the Addamses’ haunted residence, and the emotionless Addamses—living, dead and undecided—are perplexed by the Beinekes’ happy and energetic lifestyle.

Charles Addams used the line “Wednesday’s child is full of woe” from the popular nursery rhyme, “Monday’s Child” as the basis of Wednesday’s character. In previous adaptations, she was known as the grim and apathetic daughter of Gomez (Douglas Sills) and Morticia (Sara Gettelfinger) Wednesday’s hair was parted in the middle and braided. In this production, however, her hair is let loose in a bob cut as her emotions escape the grasp of her stiff gothic character.

Although it seems disappointing to find Wednesday not depicted as the character with whom most people are familiar, this embodies her changing personality as she is being “pulled in a new direction” by her love for Lucas. When Wolfson performs “Pulled,” she stands stiffly as she begins the song with the line, “I don’t have a sunny disposition,” over slow and somber music. As she begins to describe how her life is changing, however, birds begin to tweet in the background, and the music and her body language are more upbeat and lively in order to correspond with the change she is describing.

During this scene, Wednesday is torturing her brother, Pugsley (Patrick D. Kennedy), much to his enjoyment. He is on a medieval torturing device which literally pulls him into opposite directions. As Wednesday pulls the lever, Pugsley is supposed to show signs of pain; however, Kennedy’s lifeless reactions and poor timing cause the scene to seem unrealistic. With the exception of his mediocre performance in that scene, he manages to depict a conniving and mischievous little brother throughout the play.

The performers have to bring Addams’ fictional characters to life for the production to work, and Gettelfinger’s performance as Morticia is the most successful. Her calm yet assertive voice comes off as motherly. When she is around her children, her body flows affectionately, but she also stands as though she is in charge of the macabre-obsessed family. When she is around her husband, she takes a more seductive stance to show her side as a wife. These traits are embodied as she stands straight in her long, dark dress with a deep neckline. All these aspects come together as she notices that her daughter is beginning to steer away from the darkness upon which the family dwells. She fears that Wednesday will abandon her family’s dark traditions for Lucas’ family’s uplifting and energetic livelihood.

As her suspicion grows, she turns to her husband, Gomez. Wednesday has already confided in him about her love for Lucas; however, she made her father promise to not speak a word to her mother. Gomez is conflicted by the demands of the two most important women in his life, and he expresses his emotions in the song “Trapped.” The choppy music brings his uneasy feelings to life. Is it really so absurd that his daughter is marrying someone who is different from what his family thinks is normal? His uneasy body movement exhibits his desire to break free from the burden of keeping his daughter’s secret in order to satisfy his wife; however, his role as an embarrassing and protective father who laughs at his own jokes brings humor to the situation.

Uncle Fester (Blake Hammond), “a fat bald person of no specific sexuality,” is the production’s de facto narrator and furthers the plot by trapping the Beinekes in the Addamses’ residence as conflict starts to rise. His character provides comic relief to the already comical musical, making it even more enjoyable. He proclaims that he is in love with the

moon, and when he goes off into space to be united with his love, Hammond rises in the air against the blacked-out background and performs goofy dance moves, much to the audience's amusement. His peculiar character sheds light on the Addamses' crazy side and shows that not being "normal" does not necessarily have a negative connotation.

Costume and set designers Julian Crouch and Phelim McDermott intend to create a distinct contrast between the different characters and the background, and they have done so effectively. The Addamses are dressed in dark colors and in a more gothic style; however, they never blend in with the background because even in scenes in which they are acquainted with the night, the stage is illuminated so perfectly.

The family's ancestors often accompany the family onstage, but they are covered in a pasty white color from head to toe as to distinguish them from the immediate living family. Each individual is dressed according to the person they were in their past life—one is a knight, for example, and another a distressed bride. When the Beinekes search for the Addamses' residence, a sheer screen is dropped to contrast those who are alive and those who are dead—and undecided. Despite the difference in appearance, the ancestors do not fail to upstage the main characters. During the performance of "Tango de Amor," one ancestor is so passionate that the focus is directed away from Morticia.

The main conflict of the musical is the difference between Wednesday's family and Lucas' family, and this difference is emphasized through the costumes as well. When Wednesday changes from her dark wardrobe to a bright yellow dress, her father exclaims, "Paloma, what are you wearing? You look like a crime scene!" Lucas' mother, Alice (Crista Moore), subsequently enters with a similarly colored dress. Lucas' brown jacket and jeans and his father, Mal (Martin Vidnovic)'s light-colored suit further depicts how they are nothing like the Addams.

"The Addams Family" brings out the crazy side of the two families, regardless of how normal they define themselves to be. Despite the minor flaws, the production is very successful because every aspect of the story is brought to life. The actors' strong performances embody how they are not just another group of performers on stage. The choice of songs not only allows more energy to radiate throughout the theater but also furthers the plot as each song relates so closely to the events occurring onstage. The breathtaking set design breaks the barrier between the audience and the performers and makes the former forget they're sitting in their seats in the Hippodrome Theatre and imagine sitting amongst the actors onstage. This realistic performance allows the audience to connect more with the story and the redefinition of normal.

We often perceive things that are different from us as absurd; however, this production depicts that what seems normal to the Addamses seems absurd to the Beinekes—and vice versa. It also proves that whether or not we consider something normal, it may still leave a positive effect on us. The fire in Alice and Mal's relationship was going out, but when they follow Morticia and Gomez' example—one they previously thought was insane—of being honest with each other, they are able to rekindle their relationship. Similarly, Wednesday and Lucas find that in the midst of conflicts that rise from their families' inability to be "normal," their relationship can only be strengthened.

By Asher Varon

NOT YOUR AVERAGE AMERICAN MUSICAL

With ghoulish pizzazz, "The Addams Family" leaves the audience at the Hippodrome Theatre with haunting, unforgettable memories. Originally panel cartoons created by Charles Addams in the New Yorker, "The Addams Family" satirized American families with each character representing a different aspect of society. "The Addams Family" became an iconic symbol of American culture, where it continued to develop as a television series, Hollywood blockbuster and later a Broadway musical. Not only did the play display ingenuity in combining theater and pop culture, it also entertained all audience members, from New Yorker readers to Broadway fans.

Although it's a challenge to combine pop culture and Broadway, "The Addams Family" manages to do so by addressing societal issues relevant to all audience members. The writers made several allusions to contemporary culture, while maintaining Charles Addams' original intent and appealing to the original "Addams Family" generation. The show meets these tests in scenes such as "One Normal Night" where Fester introduces a modern family conflict in the middle of the song asking "who's to [judge]?" Yet the scene still portrays the fun-loving eccentric family as it is known in the cartoons.

Beginning with the classic "Addams Family" theme song, the play opened its curtains to the misty yards of the Addams clan and its past relatives. All were present--males, females, ghosts, and even "undecideds"--as they

gathered around the family tree for their traditional ghoulish-family reunion, singing “When You’re an Addams.” Narrated by the Addamses’ Uncle Fester (Blake Hammond), the play poses the question; should nonconformity to tradition and societal ideals be accepted? For instance, love should not be defined by social standards.

Led by exotic, horror-loving parents, Gomez (Douglas Sills) and Morticia (Sara Gettelfinger), Wednesday’s family, although oblivious to societal norms, possesses common family conflicts and morals. The show’s combination of horror and domestic drama adds a new element to the familiar characters and situation. The Addamses maintain the same family philosophy as the rest of humanity, trying to do what they think is best for their family.

Yet their belief system is soon challenged by Wednesday’s wish to have a “normal” family dinner with Lucas’s parents (“One Normal Night”). Infatuated with love, Wednesday (Courtney Wolfson) becomes engaged to a normal, yet defiant New Yorker named Lucas Beineke (Brian Justin Crum), who breaks the status quo to become accepted by the Wednesday’s deranged family. The family--thrown into disarray by such devious members as Pugsley (Patrick D. Kennedy), Grandma (Pippa Pearthree), and Lurch (Tom Corbeil)—is forced to meet with Mr. and Mrs. Beineke (Martin Vidnovic and Crista Moore).

However after a game of “Full Disclosure,” both families become aware of Wednesday and Lucas’s true intentions of marrying. This undermines the Addams family’s morals, as their prime belief in trust becomes undone by Gomez’s lying. This causes tensions between both the Addamses and Beinekes who now become forced to rekindle their love and cope with each other or end in shambles.

The head of the Addams family, Gomez, and his pragmatic wife, Morticia, portray society’s traditional family couple as they embody the benefits and problems of marriage. Sills steals the spotlight at the very beginning of the show with his Spanish-accented humor embodying the irony of a stereotypical “henpecked” husband. The audience who understands the classic family member roles, finds it ironic, that although Gomez attempts to appease everyone in his household, he still ends up in the “doghouse.”

Sills’ ability to incorporate comic timing along with the show’s more serious aspects demonstrates his strong presence and versatility. Promising to keep Wednesday’s secret of engagement, while attempting not to lie to his wife Morticia, poses a problem for Gomez as he becomes stuck between “the rock and the hard place.” Feeling ambushed by his wife’s curiosity and daughter’s trust, Gomez sings “Trapped,” which Sills delivers not only with a strong vocal but also considerable wit.

Gettelfinger’s realistic attitude towards Sills’ animated character develops great chemistry, as they “play off” each other quite well. When Gomez attempts to explain to Morticia Wednesday’s situation without revealing the truth, Morticia’s pushy questions collide with Gomez’s charming evasions and spark much humor. The audience relates to this, because we all know too well the temptation of evading inevitable trouble by brewing up entertaining and compelling “white lie” stories

Uncle Fester (Blake Hammond), who narrates the story and questions the audience about true love, captures the audience’s attention with his quirky personality. Obviously a favorite, Hammond transforms the cliché theme of love into a comical satire when his character Fester claims to “love the moon.” By loving an inanimate object, Fester leads with the audience through the more touchy and serious topics, like love, even as he transforms the issue into an absurdity. Anyone who has experienced love cannot help themselves from laughing.

This issue becomes further emphasized through Wednesday’s character, who attempts to embody a “normal” human-being. Wolfson, with her strong vocals and edgy character, illustrates the young adult/teen desire for acceptance from the public. Although Wolfson’s voice at times overshadows the other characters’, her blend of vibrato, emotion and spunk creates an entertaining character. When Wolfson sings “Pulled” and “Crazier than You,” her powerful stage presence takes the audience on a romantic journey, separate from the rest of the plot. Through these songs, Wednesday answers Uncle Fester’s earlier question about nonconformity, proving that love should be unaffected by societal boundaries.

“The Addams Family,” although entertaining and humorous, still did not fail to convey its important life lesson that “normal is an illusion” and that “what’s normal for the spider is strange to the fly.” As the creators of the play clearly portray throughout this peculiar family, they remind the audience that everyone has their faults and society should not be judgmental. Full of surprises, laughs, and life-lessons, “The Addams Family” spooks all audience members with an enjoyment-filled night.

By Karina Watson

AN ANYTHING BUT NORMAL NIGHT

“The Addams Family” took place in New York City’s Central Park, but you could see it through the window of the Hippodrome Theatre’s stage. This lively show was not just for old television show fans but also for young adults who know nothing about the Addamses. Anyone who enjoys a good laugh, or in this case many, could relate as an audience member and fully grasp the plot.

When watching this show, one could feel excited, nervous and delighted all in one minute. Even when the plot became more dismal, there was still an element of hope. In “Crazier Than You,” the show’s two young lovers, Wednesday Addams and Lucas Beineke, seem to be having a falling out. However the set’s authentic bow and arrow, the gigantic tree and the beautiful music kept the audience optimistic. The Addamses may appear grim to the Beineke family, but they end up as the ones spreading the love. Even when Morticia and Gomez, the two darkest characters, face troubles they bring it back to love. One could sit back and feel the love lifting their spirit.

Special effects really swept you off your feet as Uncle Fester (Blake Hammond) glided through the air during the song “The Moon and Me.” One didn’t even have time to think about how gliding through the air was possible because the theater was completely filled with laughter. Hammond’s acrobatics added to the light-hearted theme which was seen throughout the entire show. The moon was like a beach ball, being tossed across the stage. Hammond and the “moon” expressed their love through this hilarious love dance.

The show’s plot and comic elements weren’t too similar to the T.V. show but there were a few fun perks. Cousin It and the theater’s dancing curtain tassel had an adorable love affair which played out after intermission and during the closing number. This brought back good old memories for one who has been a fan for a long time. And who could forget the mysterious hand? Even if one had, it was there to pop out to pull the curtain open and closed. Just like every episode, this show had a new plot but the family antics were still in the mix.

With Wednesday having a new love interest, Pugsley couldn’t help but get upset. He feels as if he has to fight for her attention. When he tried to trick her, he ends up pranking Alice. This only leads to further conflict amongst the Beineke family. But who doesn’t love a little Addams family drama? Morticia and Gomez struggle to deal with Wednesday’s new happy attitude and dreams of marriage. In the midst of these grim issues, there’s forgiveness and love alluded to by lighting effects, costumes and fun set pieces.

The opening number helped the audience get an understanding of the Addamses. The tombstones, scary tree cutouts and a huge gate all moved “When You’re an Addams” along. This scene had one of the most elaborate sets, but it worked nicely and established the mood of darkness. From ghost sounds, owls hooting, crows calling and lightning striking there was always a dark and mysterious tone lying beneath the scenes.

The spotlight was effective in literally narrowing in on the main events. When the ghosts were present they could still be seen while one of the main characters sang. This created a nice balance and filled the space. For instance, in “Full Disclosure” whoever made a confession had the most amount of light. Yet when the company sang along with the chorus, a beautiful combination was created between the lights and the company.

It was the structured elements like this that kept the audience engaged. Although it felt as if the laughs never stopped, there was still a sense of family bonds in the room. Seeing all of the elements on stage working in harmony made one want to have a harmonious family too.

Costumes were one of the most prominent elements to this show because each one brought forth distinct characterization. Morticia’s scandalous purple dress showed that she was a leader, yet still had a chilling effect with the black lace. Alice Beineke (Crista Moore) and Mal Beineke (Martin Vidnovic) on the other hand appeared quaint and wholesome in their business-like attire of beige and grey colors.

One’s eyes were immediately drawn to the ghosts as soon as they stepped on stage. They were clothed in white drape-like costumes, each conveying a specific time period. One wore a flapper dress, the other a cave-man outfit.

Costumes helped to convey a shift in the mood. For instance, when the Beinekes arrive, the entire Addams family seemed to change their outfits a bit. Wednesday wore a bright yellow dress and Morticia wore a nice white apron. Both of these items seemed to stand out against the cracked and darkened walls of the house. Pugsley wore a vibrant green Boy Scouts’ badge and Grandma sauntered around in a Red Cross nursing gown. The entire scene was hilariously filled with a tone of discomfort since these choices were certainly not “the Addamses.”

The lighting did not fall short in establishing the mood. Every color that was used would appear in other scenes and create a completely different tone. For instance, the pink lights used to display Alice's infatuation in "Full Disclosure" were mixed with some purple to show Morticia's power in "Just Around the Corner." Other lighting effects such as lightning bolts helped to convey a mood of danger when Uncle Fester predicted the danger of the Beineke family's visit.

The ghosts did more than give the audience a good laugh. As they lurked in the background, they suggested that even though the Addamses tried to be normal they still had their "ghosts" in the closet. It was as if the audience could feel them waiting to pop out and shock the Beinekes. This element was particularly important in "Secrets" and the Act I finale. Artistic decisions like this really made this show fantastic.

Memphis

**By Joe DiPietro and David Bryan
At the Hippodrome Theatre through April 8**

**By Kiara Alexander
SYRUP ON PANCAKES**

It does matter if you're black or white in the musical "Memphis," currently at the Hippodrome Theatre. While many believe prejudices go away with time and education, "Memphis" shows how old stereotypes are transformed into new ones. And as the nation deals with unresolved race tension brought about from the murder of Trayvon Martin, an unarmed black teenager in Florida, "Memphis" could not be playing at a more appropriate time.

The show gives audiences a glimpse of what Memphis, Tennessee, was like during the 1950s in regards to race. Ninety years after the Civil War, the nation still remained divided due to race. Racism and segregation were common features to most areas, North and South alike.

The main protagonist, Huey (Bryan Fenkart) pushes the boundaries and tries to convince the public that music is color blind. He does this by putting songs performed by blacks on the radio and eventually on television. The musical successfully marks the country's progress through the discrimination that the African Americans face as well as the rejection Huey faces from his own race as he delves more deeply into uncharted territory. The musical in other aspects doesn't fare so well.

Three major factors are crucial to the plot as well as the quality of the play: music, love and miscommunication. Only one of those factors survives the play unscathed and that is miscommunication.

A problem with many musicals tends to be the language barrier: The audience speaks one language, in this case English, while the actors sing in gibberish. The frustration of straining to hear what is being said is enough to take you out of the play and that happens quite often in "Memphis."

The main offender, but certainly not the only one, is Felicia (Felicia Boswell). Boswell is a remarkable singer and her powerful voice catches you off guard when she first opens her mouth because she is so tiny. The voice may be awe-inspiring but her soul pours out of her mouth in a completely different language. This is a major problem because the musical's songs hold most of the information you need to comprehend the rest of the show.

A prime example is "Underground," a song that introduces us to the black singers and dancers. The lights dance around on stage to the movement of the ensemble and you can't look away. The song is soulful and upbeat but a lot of the lines are lost, and that takes away from the otherwise incredible performance at the start of the show. It seems the performers are so concerned with moving and singing that they forget diction is done with the tip of the tongue and the teeth.

Boswell redeems herself, somewhat though, with a solo song called “Colored Woman.” She not only sings with such a new level of passion that your mouth hangs open, but she also enunciates. But Boswell isn’t the only vocal star of the show. Gator (Rhett George), who previously hadn’t found a reason to open his mouth silences the theater at the end of act one with “Say a Prayer,” noisy breaths and all. George’s performance of “Say a Prayer” and Boswell’s performance of “Colored Woman” serve as syrup on an otherwise bland pancake.

“Memphis” is a love story as much as it is a musical fable. The main relationship is between Felicia and Huey, except only one person seems to be into it and that is Fenkart’s Huey. Fenkart plays head-over-heels in love with Felicia, while Boswell plays the annoyed-big-sister role. And while it is known that opposites attract and Felicia is supposed to be rational and understanding of the real world while Huey is carefree and naïve, she could at least smile at him once in a while.

Boswell plays Felicia as completely cold and hardened in response to Huey’s constant wooing and affection. As the script moves forward in developing their love, Boswell holds back with her acting. The lack of chemistry on stage between the two leaves the audience wondering “Why would she want to marry him when she doesn’t even like him?”

The musical’s other love stories are enough to keep you from ripping out your hair at the lack of movement in the Felicia relationship. Delray’s (Quentin Earl Darrington) love for Felicia is heartwarming. The level of protection he puts forth towards is very relatable to the audience because of the big brotherly personality we’ve all seen before. In the song “She’s My Sister,” Darrington booms his voice at Fenkart in a very threatening manner.

Another love that’ll distract you from Felicia is the love the white teenagers have for the music they hear regardless of the singers’ skin color. It brings hope to the play that eventually everyone will feel the same way about music and perhaps America can be welded together racially with the help of music.

Even if the music and love don’t quite come off well, “Memphis” is saved by exceptional performances. The musical “Memphis” is like your typical Saturday morning breakfast, pancakes. While the show would survive without pieces such as “Colored Woman” and “Say a Prayer,” it wouldn’t be as entertaining, just as pancakes could survive without syrup but it wouldn’t be as appetizing.

The societal issues touched within “Memphis” hit close to home. Painful changes can often be absorbed through art, and “Memphis” reminds us of how hostile the world used to be and, though there is still hostility present today, how it has gotten better. Maybe in the future there will be another play marking America’s further progress in the terms of race.

By Laura Ebsworth

BACK IN TIME, FEELIN' FINE

Most people would rather look towards the future than the past; but anyone that sees “Memphis” at the Hippodrome will leave thinking otherwise. From the moment it starts, audiences go back in time to the 1950s and feel the contagious rhythm and soul that slowly but surely would soon revolutionize culture and music. In this time period, with black influence, music becomes more upbeat in tempo and inspires new ways for people to express themselves. The rockin’ vibe the cast creates sucks today’s audience into the characters’ world and allows us to feel whatever the plot has in store.

Crucial to this catchy, engaging mood is the fantastic choreography of Sergio Trujillo. His in-sync and metrical choreography, consisting of groups ranging from three people to the entire cast, stays true to the time period and drives the era’s conflict between whites and blacks perfectly.

Most of the movements aren’t extremely difficult, but what makes them challenging is how much personality is needed to make them effective. The dances allow the performers to evoke the growing popularity of black music and culture through great emotion, and the dancers deliver with cosmic passion. For example, in “Scratch My Itch,” the singers’ movements are huge and filled with black soul, while the movements of the shoppers/listeners demonstrate the new style’s contagiousness through sharp, excited movements.

When actors dance with a lot of heart, they enjoy their work and give even more of themselves to their performance. In turn, audiences then appreciate what the cast is doing because now they can make a connection with the show and fully devote themselves to enjoying what is in front of them.

Another way "Memphis" delivers rhythm and soul is through the songs. The songs mesh wonderfully to create a cohesive storyline and musical; each song also has its own style and flair that highlights each and every character. Songs such as "She's My Sister," sung by Felicia's brother Delray (Quentin Earl Darrington), "Love Will Stand When All Else Falls," sung by Felicia, and "Big Love," sung by Bobby (Will Mann), add more depth to their characters and give the audience a better grasp on the issues in the plot.

The music works exceptionally well because a majority of the songs are actual numbers the characters are singing in a club, on radio or on TV rather than the actors singing about their feelings to the audience. By setting up the songs in this manner, they acquire a certain practicality which lets "Memphis" become a different kind of musical, a kind that will appeal to broader audiences because it starts sounding more comparable to today's current and popular music. This approach keeps audiences open to hearing all 21 songs.

The only negative side to the songs is that there are too many of them. Each song fits into the show very well, but it feels like there are more songs than dialogue, which sometimes leaves the audiences fidgety. People love hearing other people talk, and although songs can effectively establish what a character is feeling, spoken dialogue can provide more plot information. If more dialogue scenes exist between each song, the show will be much easier for audiences to follow and the conflicts will be stronger.

Conflicts are the meat and bones to an entire production: without them, a show would have no point whatsoever. In "Memphis," the conflict deals with Huey, along with others, breaking the racial barriers so black music can be accepted. In this time period, black music was viewed as vulgar and inappropriate for the white community, even though some whites enjoyed their music. The whole controversy over this drives the show along and creates very powerful moments.

These moments could have been spectacular, but they lack heart-wrenching and home-hitting suspense. For example, in the closing of Act 1, Felicia gets shot, and when Boswell comes back into her brother's nightclub, it sounds like she's laughing rather than crying. Also, the characters surrounding her in the nightclub lack the immensely tense vibe they should have been creating in reaction to her injury; this almost ruins the whole scene because the plot doesn't appear as believable as it did before. If her acting were more realistic, the intense cliffhanger would drive audiences insane with anticipation through intermission.

"Memphis" is all about the way "black music" became popular among white folks. Huey Calhoun (Bryan Fenkart) helps bring about this trend by first discovering a beautiful black singer named Felicia (Felicia Boswell) in her underground club. This meeting inspires him to play black records in the department store where he works. After having success with this, he gets a job at a radio station where he plays black records (and soon Felicia's songs) and his show becomes a hit with his signature phrase, "Hock-a-doo." Through Huey's adventures, "white" audiences become familiar with black culture, go crazy for its music style and slowly start to become slightly more accepting of it.

In the show, Huey is a poor, uneducated white man with a zany personality and Fenkart delivers on these personality traits and adds a nasally Southern accent. His character is similar to Tommy on the '90s TV show, "Third Rock from the Sun." At some points in the show, the accent was too strong, but overall it worked well with the scenes.

One thing that hinders his performance is his appearance. He is done up to look like a low-class, weak-ish man, but in reality he is a strong, handsome guy. In order to effectively pull off Huey, the casting director should have cast a lanky, weak, not very attractive male because it would have made Huey and his story more believable.

Boswell does justice to her character, Felicia. Her costumes are gorgeous and are appropriate for the '50s; she always wears lavish dresses that sparkle in some way. Even though her character does not come from the best area, Boswell looks like a very well-put-together star. Her star image is heightened by her remarkable voice. Full of color, her voice can belt anything and leave listeners in awe.

Her voice especially shines in the opening number of the show, "Underground," where she sings in Delray's nightclub. In this song, she wakes up the audience right away by hitting her high notes over and over in the chorus; this prompts a desire to watch her powerful rhythm and soul get exposure to broader audiences.

Despite minor criticisms, such as the leads don't have as much stage presence as they should, or Felicia's name isn't mentioned until halfway through the show, "Memphis" consistently brings the house down with its especially talented cast and captivating story. The show pushes that time period's boundaries in many ways varying from exposure to

black music to a white man and a black woman kissing on live TV, and it's intriguing to see something that demonstrates how the efforts made back then make our lives today much better.

By Tatiana Mullin

“A STORY FASTER THAN THE MUSIC”

“Memphis” was not a bad musical, but to be truly appreciated it required some serious previous knowledge of the time period, especially of the era’s music. Because this musical got so many good reviews one would think it’s unfair to expect previous research of the show before seeing it. A show should be able to tell the whole story without previous research so the audience never feels lost or out of the loop. Some audiences may be disappointed when not everything is as obvious as other shows. The scenery and the actor’s voices captured one’s attention far more than the plot or storyline.

This musical at the Hippodrome Theatre is supposed to explain the story of how Dewey Philips, renamed Huey Calhoun in the musical, became the first white DJ to play black music. The point was to show his journey to success and how a small change in music on the radio could change a whole era’s social standards. From a general standpoint the goal was achieved. Huey made a huge impact in the music world, but the fighting between the races took a lot away from the show’s primary message that music can bring people from different backgrounds together.

The storyline did show a typical story of heartache because Huey fell in love with an African-American singer named Felicia. He worked hard to get her on the radio which helped not only her but also himself in their ultimate goals. He wanted to get the “black” music on the radio, not to start a race showdown but just because the upbeat music would be popular with a younger crowd. He and Felicia had to overcome racial slurs and having Felicia get beaten up by a group of white racists to spread a different kind of music around Memphis.

The numbers sung during the show, however, focused more on the storyline between the characters than the ultimate point of how the music world changed and became more accepting of the “black” music in the long-run of rock and roll.

The actors playing Huey Calhoun and Felicia were very over-the-top in how they expressed their Southern accents and characters in general. In fact, the cast overall was much exaggerated, and this took away from the realistic view that the musical is supposed to portray. It made the musical more of a comedy and completely distracted from its supposed focus.

After Felicia gets beaten up and she’s carried down into the club, she was so overly dramatic with her lines and accent that it was very difficult to take seriously what just happened. In that moment, the focus should have been on why the situation just happened and how real that was at the time.

When leaving the show the only things that were remembered were the characters’ strong voices and the use of the scenery throughout the show. Felicia’s voice was the most memorable aspect of the entire musical not because of the lyrics she was singing but because of the pure power and emotion she conveyed.

One never had the feeling that this story was ever realistic in anyway. The songs were placed in such awkward ways that one never got the feeling that they flowed naturally into the story line. It felt as though the storyline would just pause for the song to fit in.

The way Huey carried himself with very sloppy clothing and to his own beat and the way he spoke made it difficult to tell whether his behavior and accent were the actor’s fault or an intentional joke. It was possible that he was just supposed to be obviously unintelligent, but it was too exaggerated and should have been toned down a little to help make the show more serious for the right reasons. The Southern accents in general were not done to their best and that definitely took a lot of the serious meaning from the musical at the end.

The scenery and props really added to understanding where and what was happening throughout the musical. It was especially interesting the way the stage was horizontally cut in half to show different, simultaneous scenes and to stress certain aspects of the show. When a group of white men were sneaking up to attack the mixed couple, Felicia and Huey, the separation really emphasized the seriousness of the matter.

Despite the fact that “Memphis” is a musical, there was not enough music to really show the whole story. The importance was to show how lame the “white” music at the time was compared to the upbeat “black” music. The songs did a decent job of that, but the samples of the “white” and “black” music didn’t feel as though they were taken from that time period and the samples that were given were so quickly played that it felt rushed. If more of the classic “black” music that was universally known at the time was involved in the show the audience would have gotten more out of the real message.

Instead, the difference in the music was put on the different races themselves. It may be true that the races had very different tastes in music, but the focus should have been on the music and how the whites at the time enjoyed the “black” music and accepted it, not on the two races “fighting” for each side of their music they stood for. The focus should have been on how music can bring together different people who would have never met otherwise, come to show that music is universal no matter what color skin you have.

By Madison Nelson

“MEMPHIS” SMASHES A HIT IN BALTIMORE

From the moment the crimson curtains open to a vibrant scene of fast music and dancing, one knows “Memphis,” now playing at the Hippodrome Theatre, is going to be a hit. Joe DiPietro has taken the controversial subject of race in the 1950s and used the passion and life to spin a love story and show how music can affect people in ways they never even know. Through the effect the songs have on us, one can truly see that music can change people.

Bryan Fenkart and Felicia Boswell, who play the main characters Huey and Felicia, don’t hold back the lively rhythm from start to finish. Fenkart takes an awkward character and turns him into a hilarious, oddly charming being. He is a sheltered boy from the white side of town, with just enough audacity to venture into a black night club one night, drawn by the passionate music. Huey can’t do anything right it seems, but as he grows, his awkward, funny character becomes lovable.

While Boswell is vibrant and beautiful, with the voice of an angel, she’s the complete opposite. She’s different not only because of her race but also because she is lively and stunning, people are obviously drawn to her, while Huey makes many people confused and wary of his spontaneity. But despite their differences, the two do not clash but rather make their romance on stage almost seem real.

But even the supporting characters made this production flow easily and work beautifully. The company had such spirit in what they did you couldn’t help but fall in love with the show, and the vibrant, passionate dancing. The singing and choreography was so lively it seemed almost impossible that it was on stage.

The fun, soulful soundtrack keeps the company moving and flowing to the beat; the music became so intense and exciting even audience members began dancing in their seats, one just couldn’t help it. As the show closed with its final song audience members danced in their seats and swayed to the fun music.

When cast members and writers can take intense themes such as race, segregation and even hopeless love and mix it with a vibrant, powerful soundtrack and a script so humorous audience members shouted with laughter—you know you have a hit. The contradiction, serious subjects and singing/dancing, is what truly makes the show work. One wouldn’t expect something to work so easily, and as these subjects shouldn’t be taken lightly, the fact that they mix a serious mood into the show really makes it powerful.

As the plot thickens and the story goes on to years later, we also begin to see the characters grow and change. Huey and Felicia’s relationship is so serious that marriage is discussed, while Felicia’s music is becoming more popular than ever. But it isn’t easy for this young couple. The idea that a white man and a black woman could mix seems preposterous to many people—so many people that Huey and Felicia are attacked one night because of their love. We witness the two be beaten severely and suddenly we see the problem; the mood shifts and the serious tone keeps audience members questioning what may happen next.

After the attack, the two decide to keep their relationship a secret but even then we see them grow and change. Huey goes on from a radio station to his very own TV show, and Felicia is so popular, producers in New York want her.

Memphis is beginning to adjust to the different race to see that they really are no different. Even Huey's mother, played by Julie Johnson, who begins her role as a typical '50s woman: strict, doting on her son and completely against interracial relationships, begins to adjust to the idea of her sons love for Felicia and that it won't change.

Johnson's character even has the audience laughing as she makes jokes on Huey's wardrobe stating, "You look like a Christmas tree with a drinking problem!" Johnson begins her song "Change Don't Come Easy" which keeps the audience in tears of laughter and enjoying the vibrant beat especially, but also touching on the hard times these characters are stuck in. People don't change easily, as is stated in the song, and sometimes patience just isn't enough.

As the show begins to end we see a complication, Felicia wants to go to New York to pursue her career. Huey can come with her and have his TV show—as long as he uses white dancers. Huey, who began the show walking into an all-black bar being the only white male, is a natural rebel and refuses to give up his dancers. He rebels against the producers' wishes and proves a point that he won't change himself—or his show—for anyone. At this point, Huey is so fired up he kisses Felicia on air, in front of all of Memphis—something that many people don't want to see.

Felicia is in tears and leaves Huey, and this leaves Huey all alone. But when the show closes with the soulful song, "Steal Your Rock N' Roll," it exemplifies that no one should be able to take your rock and roll away from you.

By Abby Salazar HOCK-A-DOO

Huey Calhoun (Bryan Fenkart), a white high school dropout, struggles to keep his job at a local department store, so he makes a deal with his boss: if he can sell four—no, five—records, he can keep his job. He begins to play a slow and boring tune, but he interrupts the song with a record that white customers aren't used to hearing in the 1950s. Not only can we hear the singer, we can see him as the Hippodrome Theatre spotlight shifts to Wailin' Joe (Kent Overshown). This black musician performs the lively and upbeat "Scratch My Itch," so enticing that Huey sells 29 copies before it's over.

Despite these sales, Huey is fired anyway. The answer to "Why?" is brought to life in the new musical, "Memphis," as Huey fights for the two things he is most passionate about: African-Americans music and Felicia (Felicia Boswell), his African-American sweetheart.

The difficulty of bringing the theme of social injustice to life after it has been done many times before is evident in the show. The ideas of forbidden love and impossible dreams are very common and can seem to drag on forever; however, the creators of "Memphis" make them a little more interesting through Huey's character. The uneducated dropout who wears tacky outfits that mirror his personality brings the much-needed light touch to the unfortunate events of the 1950s through his unorthodox approach to changing the world.

"Memphis" is like "Hairspray" with a twist. Much like the latter musical, which was set in the 1960s, "Memphis" depicts the story of how a naïve white teenager blindly joins people of color and brings the community together—both black and white—through the power of music. Striking similarities include the filming of a television show. The angles at which the cameras are placed are almost identical in Huey's television show and "The Corny Collins Show" in "Hairspray."

"Memphis," however, shows the more hopeless and violent side of racial prejudice as African-Americans are held back from their dreams, and anyone—regardless of his or her skin color—who tries to help them is persecuted.

When Huey stumbles upon a club "on the dark side of town," as his father puts it, he meets Felicia, the sister of the club owner Delray (Quentin Earl Darrington). When they dance to "Ain't Nothing But a Kiss," Huey's moves are big and wild, much like his personality, while Felicia's controlled moves show how she is stubborn but strong and powerful.

As Huey visits the club more and more often, his relationship with Felicia develops, much to Delray's dismay. Besides being a worried older brother, Delray is even more concerned about society's reaction to their relationship. He sternly warns Huey that people of 1950s Tennessee will surely not approve of a white man and an African-American woman being together. His argument is undermined, however, by his weak body movement. For an issue in which his

character is very passionate, Darrington should have used bigger and more powerful gestures to establish his assertiveness.

Huey's Mama (Julie Johnson) soon learns of her son's love interest and expresses her concern by telling him that someone left him a note—on a brick that was smashed through their kitchen window. When Huey requests that she broadcasts his radio station in the diner where she works, she ironically exclaims how she can't do so because "good Christians go there!" Huey refuses to agree to his mother's pleas to stay away from the black community and continues to try to help them further expose their music. Despite lacking the support from his mother—and the rest of the white community—his determination to fight for his passion is ultimately what pushes a movement toward social justice.

When Huey promises to get Felicia on the radio, he applies for a job at a local radio station. Much to the dismay of the owner, Mr. Simmons (William Parry), he plays "Everybody Wants to Be Black on a Saturday Night," yet another African-American rock song. The spotlight shifts away from the radio station to show the singers behind the record and the listeners out in radioland. In this scene, the production does what it does best: allowing various characters on stage at the same time even if they're not in the same place in the plot.

Three African-American men dressed in gold, sparkly outfits appear in a spotlight above the radio station. The lighting onstage gives the impression of the performers literally being on an enlarged vinyl record while the rest of the stage is dimmed. Light is shed upon the white teenagers listening to the radio as they happily and energetically dance to the music. Mr. Simmons is initially enraged; however, after receiving numerous calls requesting Huey to play more of his "race music," the conservative white owner decides to let him stay. Huey's bold move allows a gradual change in African-Americans' place in society; people begin to become more accepting of them.

Throughout his career in the music industry, Huey rides a rollercoaster of success and failure. He is able to convince his Mama—and other teenagers—to attend an African-American church where they are accepted and inspired to have a change of heart. While working at the radio station, Huey's inability to read causes him to have a catchphrase, "Hock-a-Doo!" The line is referenced throughout the show; however, it is said so weakly, even as the last line spoken in the production, that it does not have a lasting effect on the audience.

Huey's success on the radio lands him many opportunities, but he denies them all—including the chance to safely be with Felicia—because "We ain't gonna leave Memphis 'cause we gonna be Memphis!" Despite the years of his downward spiral, Felicia returns to Memphis and performs one last song with the one who allowed her music career to get that far. Felicia's success shows how the perseverance of one young, goofy man can create a big change.

Although the plot is one that has been overdone, it still emphasizes an important part of American history. Huey's determination to further his and Felicia's music careers creates a revolutionary effect on interracial relationships in his city. The show emphasizes the significance of the African-American music scene and how it affected the movement for African-American rights. Despite the weak points of the show, the production still presents a strong message that empowers the African-Americans who were not accepted in their own town during the 1950s; all it needs is a little more passion.

By Asher Varon

ONE "HOCK-A-DOO" OF A SHOW

Filled with energy, excitement and a little country twang, the upbeat production of "Memphis" at the Hippodrome Theatre gives the audience a "hock-a-doo" of a good time, as the lead character Huey might put it. Combining a historical narrative of the racially discriminatory South in the 1950s with gospel, R&B country and rock, "Memphis" creates a fast-paced and electrifying musical, enjoyable for all ages. Through music, dance and technical aspects, "Memphis" contrasts the white and black pop cultures of the decade.

The show's main element however, is not the actors or the set, but the music which not only tells the story, but also moves the show along. Displaying various moods, tempos and genres, the music allows the audience to feel the show and the emotions in a dynamic sense. At some points, the music literally intertwines itself into the show becoming a part of the set and backgrounds, as the show uses a real band on stage, instead of an orchestra in a pit. This enables the show to become more realistic because the show starts to resemble its subject matter. The musical talent becomes a means for portraying social themes as well as a source of enjoyment.

Personifying the show's attempt to merge cultures and to break social boundaries is Huey (Bryan Fenkart), a stereotypical fast-talking, white-country bumpkin, who begins playing black music. Although at first a store retailer, Huey climbs the corporate ladder of the music industry, eventually becoming a disc-jockey for an all-white-radio station ("Hello, My Name Is Huey").

It all starts when Huey meets the black nightclub singer Felicia (Felicia Boswell) and her over-protective brother Delray (Quentin Earl Darrington). Huey views his encounter with "black folk" as an opportunity to change white stereotypes and prove society's faults, using Felicia as his focal point. From Felicia's club singing in Delray's night club ("Underground") to her first record, Boswell's use of dynamics and wide-vocal range, allow for the varying moods in the show.

Entranced by Felicia's voice, Huey becomes determined to rise to the top of the music industry, making his radio station number one "in all of Memphis," despite society's beliefs that "whites should stay with whites" only. Fenkart demonstrates Huey's ambition and determination later on when Huey introduces himself to a corporate agent of the TV industry.

However, Huey and Felicia soon become targets of racial hatred, as society attempts to thwart the integration of black and whites, as well as their rise to fame. Boldly challenging the community's beliefs, Huey and Felicia fall in love, emphasizing the importance of uniting cultures.

In one scene, Huey urges Felicia to join his radio show, although she doesn't have a record to play. This encouragement demonstrates the actors' unique perspective in portraying their love for each other. They are able to emotionally connect their characters without using the typical portrayals of two characters' love through physical interaction. Through song, because of its crucial significance to the show, the actors express their emotions with each note as the composition of the music relates to the feelings of the characters on stage.

Defying the advice of friends and relatives, such as Huey's Mama (Julie Johnson) and Delray's men Gator (Rhett George) and Bobby (Will Mann), Huey and Felicia continue their quest for fame. Recruited for national television but rejected as a duo, Huey and Felicia must face a reality that society is unprepared for pivotal changes. Confronting the prejudices of both races, Huey and Felicia rise to fame, Huey as a famous radio jockey and Felicia as one of the first African-American women to be played on white radio.

Not only does Fenkart still embody the comic country swagger of Huey's character, but also Huey's persistence and good ethics. Although Huey himself is initially accepted, the agent rejects the show's "colored" cast. Yet, Huey continues to fight the agent, until he resigns and realizes he won't go on TV representing false morals.

Posing the question of fame vs. morality, the characters in "Memphis" are forced to choose between fulfilling their dreams of fame within a morally corrupt society or maintaining ethical standards. With precise, creative execution, "Memphis" managed to intertwine serious subject matter with its entertainment.

One scene which displays both the satire and entertainment of the show is when Huey and Felicia perform their television show in front of a nationally acclaimed agent. The situation's pressure reveals the characters' true emotions. Although both the whites and blacks dance to the newly integrated rock'n'roll music, symbolizing the combination of both cultures, the producer rejects this integration ("Tear Down the House"), challenging them to decide whether they'll trade morality for fame.

Through the use of costumes in this number, the scene clearly portrays the separation between races, as the whites wear plain clothes, while the blacks wear a variety of colorful arrangements. In addition to these subtle references, more apparent symbols of segregation are portrayed with the style of dance utilized by the whites and blacks in their dance combinations. The blacks, again, embody a more open and modern adaption of dance (swing style), while the whites remain more traditional to their dance moves. Yet, the overall message remains that blacks and whites can interact, creating a combined new culture, while still maintaining their own distinct cultures.

With an animated lead in Fenkart and a powerful vocalist in Boswell, an energized cast and a creatively adapted set, "Memphis" entertains and engages the audience while also giving them a new perspective. "Memphis" far exceeds what seems possible, leaving the audience with a classic Broadway experience. As proven within the play itself, even an impossible task such as defying morally incorrect social standards can be done. All it takes is effort.

~~Black Old Song~~ AND DANCE

One could say that watching “Memphis” is like eating plain pancakes for every single meal every single day because of the redundant musical numbers and acting choices made. However, some nicer features to this show can be considered as a bit of syrup on the side. If a few drops of sweetener are all one needs to eat the same old thing, “Memphis” is on the menu at the Hippodrome Theatre now.

Watching this show, it was hard to differentiate one plot point or one song from another. Everything was repetitious. Each song seemed to stay on the exact same level as the previous one without a hint of higher or lower energy. It was as if the audience were being told, “Felicia Boswell has an amazing range,” 20 times in a row. If the songs were pancakes however, the syrup was the lively dance numbers. By the second act, one knew that Felicia Boswell’s character would sing at least once in every scene. But no one knew when the next dance number was coming or what it would hold.

“Memphis” told the story of a few dreamers living in the same southern town. Because he was white, Huey (Bryan Fenkart) stood out when he tried to explore his dreams. Felicia didn’t believe him when he said he’d make her, a common black woman, famous. As they worked together and explored their life in the music business, they had a deep love which boiled down to whether they could overcome the resistance of a segregated society or not.

If it weren’t for Felicia, this show could’ve been something magical. With an opening like “Underground,” it was apparent that Boswell could sing her heart out. But by “Ain’t Nothin’ but a Kiss,” Felicia’s ability to draw notes out in an R&B style, became boring.

During this song, Felicia would sing and then the scene where Huey discovers Felicia’s club would continue. Meanwhile Felicia would just stand on stage with her back turned until the song started again. She could have talked to some band members or people in the club or have done anything to improv. The fact that Felicia made no effort to “entertain” just made the club set-up completely fail. It was as if she were waiting for the next song to sing instead of focusing on the task at hand.

The only person who got to shine in this show was Felicia (Felicia Boswell), even if she went over the top in every single song. Therefore, by the time “Change Don’t Come Easy” came up and Mama (Julie Johnson) was supposed have her time to shine as a rock’n’roll diva, that tune had already been overdone.

Mama, who was your everyday white Christian, had never before explored anything other than what society wanted. However, she stepped outside of her box in this scene as she danced and sang her heart out. Mama held her notes out, belted every tune and had a huge finish, but unfortunately she just blended in with everyone else who had a solo and this defeated the purpose of the song.

Amid the repetition, “Change Don’t Come Easy” was saved by Mama, Delray, Gator and Bobby who danced around with exhilarating passion. Even though the song was just like all of the others, the dancers managed to pour some syrup on the same old pancakes the audience had been eating since the first scene.

Another flaw within the music was the use of too many double finishes. With a song like “Say a Prayer,” the real meaning and emotion comes from the lyrics. However, Gator (Rhett George) had various “big” moments within the song. This took away from the real finale of the song because the audience had already heard what Gator was capable of. The surprise was ruined.

By using too many double endings, too much belting within a song and only using upbeat songs, R&B was portrayed as one-sided and outmoded. Every song that Felicia sang was a big deal and it was unrealistic. A character should have a nice range within their vocal appearances and their dialogue. Every time Felicia had a line, however, she used the same gestures as before and would just move her head from either the left or the right.

The costumes and the dance numbers were what really glorified R&B in the ‘50s. Without these dollops of syrup, “Memphis” would’ve been hopeless. The dance numbers were always lively and fresh. Each number showcased a different style, yet they all glorified the ‘50s. The dances were faster and more sexually driven than typical “white” moves, yet they were still prepared with style and taste.

When Felicia visits Huey’s apartment before “Make Me Stronger,” she wears a white shirt and a beige pencil skirt to show that she’s a conservative, everyday woman. But when she went onto Huey’s T.V. show, her shiny green gown revealed Felicia’s versatility. This is the change one wants to see throughout a show and the production would’ve been more successful if there had been more versatility within Felicia.

The use of the color purple was very alluring. During the opening numbers, “Underground” and “The Music of My Soul,” Felicia and various company members wore purple ties, dresses and shirts with purple lights in the background. This really brought the numbers to life because it contrasted with the “white” store Huey worked at and Huey’s house. White ensemble members didn’t wear anything near purple which reinforced the feeling of segregation.

Huey was the only character that showed a nice range. Fenkart could sing beautifully when he had a song; he could stay in character even when he wasn’t speaking and when he did speak he put everyone else to shame. He was completely in tune with his character’s emotions at all times.

In the beginning of the show, Huey was just some cheesy white dreamer. But the audience got to see him grow as he morphed into a well to-do TV host. But Fenkart went above and beyond the manuscript and changed his whole persona by creating new physical and vocal choices.

Although watching this show was like eating the same meal over and over and dying for some change, there were occasional servings of syrup. This show seemed to embark on the same journey every other musical does, yet there wasn’t enough diversity between songs and scenes.

However, one thing that did set this show apart from most musicals that end with a happy protagonist was the fact that there wasn’t a fairytale ending for Huey. He ends up more melancholy than ever before and although this isn’t what most like to see, the ending did this show a great favor. After watching a show where one could predict every song’s contents, an unpredictable ending gave the audience something different to think about as they left the theater with a full belly of pancakes.