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Ragtime, Magic Circle Theatre

Review: What a fantastic show! The cast is so talented and the music is just amazing. There were a number of times that I had goosebumps just listening to the group of talented voices on stage. What an incredibly difficult show to do for a community theater and what an exceptional job they did!

Review: I found the show to be a mixed bag. It was plagued with technical problems. The sound was hit and miss and the actors weren't even lit properly through much of the show. The director opted to use a rear projector to flash black and white photos against a white screen in lieu of a traditional set. That actually would have been effective if the audience didn't have to SEE the projector on the stage for half of the show. If they work through the tech issues, it should help the flow immensely. On the positive side, the large cast sounds great on the ensemble numbers and the musical direction is excellent. The actors who play Coalhouse and Tateh are very good and the most believable in the show. The little boy who played the youngest son was excellent and although it was a smaller role, grandfather was quite funny. Mother has a pleasant singing voice, but I didn't find her to be a compelling presence onstage. Father was the weakest link of the principal actors and seemed to have no grasp on his character at all. He sings fine but just seemed horribly miscast. The girl who played Sarah was not without talent, but was trying too hard to sing her part like Beyonce instead of Audra McDonald. She's probably too young to play such a demanding role. All that being said, the show works until the last 20 minutes or so. The actress who plays Emma Goldman can't vocally pull off "He Wanted to Say", Coalhouse's crew seems to not understand their motivation during "Let Them Hear You", and that kills what should be an emotional moment in the second act. The whole moment between father and Coalhouse at the end falls flat as well. I imagine the show will probably get better as the run continues and I certainly don't feel like it was a waste of money. Go see it in two weeks when they have some more time to work through the issues

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Review: Yes, there were significant tech issues the night I was there (opening night... it happens). However, that doesn't mean that there aren't several things to admire about this production. Magic Circle patrons will be treated to a good mix of familiar faces, and very talented newcomers. I thought the strongest performance in the show was Jeff Heatherly as Tateh. Kudos to him for finding so many different layers to the character and avoiding the understandable temptation to play it like Tevye in "Fiddler". Stephen Collins (from MTV's "the Real World") is a charismatic Coalhouse Walker. And there were some fun supporting performances from Bob Gerould as Grandfather and also the girl who played Evelyn Nesbit. Both of the children were adorable, although the little boy was particularly good. Jennifer Vaughn's music direction was on point and she gets a great sound from the 40 person cast. While seeing the projection machine onstage was distracting, the decision to use it totally worked. Using black and white still photos gave the show that old-time, Ken Burns documentary sort of vibe. The costume design in the show was excellent as well. The bottom line is that "Ragtime" is a really ambitious show for any community theater. But this is a good production that will only get better over the course of the run. Go check it out!
- DRM

Review: I just saw it the first Sunday matinee. Mother had the best voice of all for the women, Houdini and Coalhouse did for the men. Sarah didn't have much of a musical-sounding voice, she came off as more R&B and was way too much into using chest voice and tightening her jaw, which made her sound much too loud and belty on the big notes. The ensemble singing however was excellent. There were some technical problems with the mikes sometimes turning off. Costumes were beautiful, set design was clever and artistic. I would recommend the show. It wasn't great, but it was good.

Review: We rarely see any play on opening night because of the inherent difficulties of a first performance, but friends invited us to Ragtime on Friday night, and we were pleasantly surprised at the quality that was there even on opening night. This was a very thought-provoking and emotionally charged play. It opened our eyes to much of the true-to-life situations of early America, bringing me to tears a couple of times. The music was absolutely wonderful - every lead actor having an amazing voice (including the two children in the play). However, we felt the orchestra was overpowering much of the time to the point it distracted from the performance of the actors rather than complementing them. The passion of Tateh was convincing throughout the play; Coalhouse was fabulous; the grandfather and little boy had comedic lines

which were delivered perfectly; and we were impressed with the energy behind the performance of Younger Brother. There were times we were unable to understand some of the dialogue, but I think it was a technical issue involving the mics that will be worked out with time. Overall, the performance was very professionally done, well directed, and well worth the time and money to see.

Review: I saw it opening night. I felt there were tech issues that really bothered me. In the front row, I had a hard time understanding key facets of the story because the dialogue was muddled with bad sound. Those things will get fixed with time. Mother's Voice was beautiful, though her acting left a little to be desired. Sarah wasn't bad, but she seemed like she was trying too hard to me. When she slipped out of character her voice was much more pleasant to hear. The Children were fabulous. I have to say though that I ADORED Coalhouse, Younger Brother, and Tateh. Their story lines were very engaging. The actors who played them did a great job of engaging you in the story. I will say that I was unprepared for some of the language in the story. I didn't bring any kids to the show but those who do should be aware of the inevitable conversations about race that should follow. Overall, I enjoyed it.

Review: Ragtime is a beautiful show and Magic Circle does a wonderful job of getting the emotion and beauty of the show across. I went to the Sunday Matinee and lots of the tech issues that I have heard about have been worked out. The vocals are gorgeous. Jennifer Vaughn does an amazing job of getting a wonderful blend and sound from her cast. Jeff Heatherly is an amazing Tateh, he is played passionately from the moment his character is introduced and his relationship and love for his daughter is shown from the first time you see them interact. Stephen Nichols is a very convincing Coalhouse. His emotions are so genuine that you forget he is acting (but isn't that the point. His relationship with Sarah and her admiration for him come thru well. While Sarah Null doesn't always carry the vocal part of Emma, her portrayal is wonderful. She is immersed in her character. Father and Mother are a wonderful combination, both vocally and acting wise. Younger brother is pure talent, you can feel his emotions all the way to the balcony, bravo to him! The children are both very believable, their facials are wonderful. Cameron Dayton as Little Brother has great timing. Miriam Mars, as Tateh's daughter makes you want to take her home. I could go on about so many of the actors, kudos to Brent Null for directing such believable actors! His passion for the show comes thru. The ugliness of racial hatred and ignorance comes thru and makes the audience as uncomfortable as it should. Congratulations on a bringing a very

poignant powerful show to a community theatre! I'm going back for seconds!

Review: Absolutely outstanding! The standing audience's standing ovation was not long enough to give full tribute to a masterful cast with exceptional voices. I plan to see it again after they have fixed a few technical problems that were evident on the first weekend. Besides the singers, credit must be paid to the set designers and costumers - all first class for a local theatrical production. Go see it!

Review: thought the play was fantastic I was extremely moved by mother's voice and WOW!!!! the Euphonium player in the orchestra added the drama that IS required in a show of this magnitude..... Tateh was very believable in his role and should be commended for a job well done... Sarah and Coalhouse were exceptional and had an obvious connection on stage... The use of projected sets was very effective as well. Just a few technical issues that still need to be worked out.

Review: This show is a must see. Magic Circle is always consistant in finding talented people to cast their shows and Ragtime showcases that ten fold. I recommend it to all who read this site and will be forcing friends to come and experience this show. The singing complements the fabulous music well. The stand-outs really being Mother and Tateh (my favorite). Coalhouse, Sarah, Father, and Younger Brother were also excellent. I also wanted more of Grandfather, but you can't add lines to McNally. Oh Well. A great supporting cast which is always the secret weapon. A well rounded show and one of the best I have seen at Magic Circle.

- R

Review: Tateh was very good. Evelyn had me wishing her part was bigger so she could spend more time onstage. Coalhouse was very charismatic, but the Sarah opposite him was flat both vocally and emotionally. Mother's voice is very pretty, but that's all I can say for her. She did not let the passion that is necessary for her role to come across enough for the audience to feel it. Father was okay. I don't think he was dreadful but I don't think he was all that great either. Mother's Younger Brother was excellent. He had wonderful diction (which many other cast members lacked) and his voice suited his part well. Emma Goldman was completely miscast. The fire chief was hard to believe. It seemed like he didn't want to commit to his part, which is somewhat understandable given the role, but it pulls us out of the story to see an actor who is uncomfortable with his character. I thought that the black-and-white

background photos were busy and distracting, and the some of the costumes were a complete mess. But if I had been sitting farther back, perhaps neither of these would have been an issue. There were still technical difficulties when I saw it, but nothing that was too awful. No set pieces came crashing down, and the microphones were mostly functional. As an entire package the show is mediocre. Given all the good and the bad, it levels out to a luke-warm so-so.

- M

Review: This is one of the most emotionally impacting and riveting shows I have ever seen. Truly a masterpiece. The entire cast was incredible. So many moments of chills and goosebumps. This is powerful production with flawless casting (especially Coalhouse, Mother, Tateh, Father, Younger Brother, Houdini, Emma Goldman and the children). About Sarah and her voice...I found it too modern and a touch screechy at times. The show moved seamlessly from scene to scene (using old black and white photos on a HUGE screen to denote place) and flowed better than any production I have seen in some time...especially given the amount and number of set changes (including a Model T - how did they do that on that small stage???) Having seen the 3 hour touring production at the Community Center a number of years ago, this production sails in at 2:35 with an intermission! Do yourself a favor and get to Magic Circle and see this show! I have made reservations to see it a third time. And I understand from the Box Office they have received standing ovations every night so if you want tickets, get them NOW!

- Alan

Review: Ragtime is the sort of epic musical that many theaters (especially community theaters) shy away from due to the difficulty in producing a show of this size and scope. Not only is it difficult from a technical aspect, the music is exceptionally hard. Roseville's Magic Circle has pulled off one giant coup in producing Ragtime. Aside from some very minor microphone issues experienced at last night's performance, the show is rock solid. The opening number alone is worth the price of a ticket! Standout performances by the entire cast and ensemble make Ragtime a must-see. Erin Johnson Gabriele brings a grace and beauty to the role of Mother that comes through her amazing voice. Stephen Nichols as Coalhouse Walker Jr. is engaging and charismatic. Jeffrey Heatherly was brilliant in the role of Tateh. His story and transformation was by far the most engrossing. The perfectly stiff Father was played expertly by Ryan Adame. Brad Bong gives an exceedingly strong performance as the very idealistic Younger Brother. Cameron Dayton and Miriam Mars are delightful as the Little Boy and Little Girl (especially

during "Nothing Like the City"). Two of the strongest performances of the night came from two of the smaller roles in the show: Sarah Kalsey Null (as Emma Goldman) and Elise Reese (as Sarah's friend). As Emma, Ms. Null was passionate and persistent in her portrayal of the "radical anarchist". And Elise Reese brought the house down with her Act 1 finale of "Til We Reach that Day". Other shining stars of the night belong to Shara Medford as the one-time starlet Evelyn Nesbit and Michael Wootton as illusionist Harry Houdini. It's a shame they didn't have more stage time. I think the thing that makes this show so outstanding is the level of the incredible talent accumulated all in one place at one time. I counted 45 names in the playbill. Where did they find all that talent? Wherever it was, I certainly hope they keep them. I am headed back closing weekend for my third helping!

- Stacey B.

Review: One of the best shows I have ever seen at Magic Circus. Brent Nul truly has shined as a director. The cast is absolutely phenomenal. Very seldom do I find myself being absorbed by the actors and music, that I forget I'm watching a show. It was so beautiful. I will say that some of the highlights of this production were taken and "copied" from the original. However, they do it beautifully. I realize the actors have been praised a lot in all these reviews, which they are completely deserving of, but the show would not have been possible without Nul and Garrison. The BEST directors at Magic Circus Theater. Combining their talents together was a brilliant idea. They both deserve the standing ovation I witnessed in tonight's performance. If you have not seen the show, get out there NOW!!! It is amazing!!!

- Eric

Review: I LOVE this show!

- Rocklin Resident

Review: After the show on Sunday we were filled with emotion. The theme and story and outcome were stirring. But our emotion was a feeling of awe and appreciation for the tremendous job Mr. Null did with the directing and the producing of this show. Having directed and produced several Broadway musicals before, I have a full appreciation for the ingenuity, creativity, and awesome endeavor he put into making that show so marvelous. The staging, the design, the movement of such a large cast in such a magical way really was remarkable. The way he was able to relate to the individuals the character they needed to portray was outstanding. Since this was the opening show of the season I am sure that it will draw in many people hungry for more top quality theatre

experiences. Well done! Magic Circle is so fortunate to have Mr. Null. We are amazed at his talent and energy. Thanks for such a wonderful experience.

- A.J.S.

Review: I have seen Ragtime 3 times and cannot wait to go back once more before this spectacular show closes. The story is beautiful, moving, emotional and unforgettable. The extraordinarily talented cast was flawless. Mother and Father were perfectly cast; both are not only wonderful singers with lovely voices, but are extraordinary actors as well. Younger brother is an exceptional singer also. Tatak was amazing and I loved the relationship between he and his little girl. There were several emotional moments during this wonderful show: Sarah singing Your Father's Son, and the song sung at the end of the first act. Elise's voice and emotion made me weep. The ballgame interlude provided just enough humor to sweeten the experience. The song Journey On sung by Father and Tatak was beautifully done. The overall production and this extremely talented cast all assembled on one stage made this one of the best shows I have ever seen. I cannot wait to see it one more time!

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