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## audience reviews

### *Meet Me in St. Louis*, Runaway Stage Productions (Broadway Stage)

**Review:** This was my first visit to Runaway Stage Productions (being a frequent theatre-goer for years, but recently relocated to Sacramento), and I was excited to see one of my family's favorites up on the stage. RSP did not disappoint with this show - a lovely feature cast, gorgeous costumes, and nice finishing touches on the set. The lightwork was also very well thought, especially in the final scene emulating fireworks and the 1904 the Worlds' Faire electric lights. Of the cast, the clear stand out was Kay Hight, who portrayed the much beloved (and Judy Garland famed) character of Esther Smith. Her vocals were sweet and sincere, including a fantastic rendition of "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas". She also highlighted the well-known "Trolley Song" with fabulous dynamics and story-telling tones. I much enjoyed her scenes with John (played by Tyler Robinson), where the essence of first love was very present in Hight's performance (with a less convincing but honest effort by Robinson). I was, however, surprised to see the costumer wig her as blonde - especially when I spoke with her afterwards and found that she was a redhead! I also liked Ben Herrera as older brother Lon Smith (a small role in the film, which is much expanded for the stage), who had true brotherly repore with his costars and excellent vocal power in the dance number "Banjo". Other notable performances were Anne-Marie Pringle as the lively Irish maid Katie (wonderful voice!), and Trey Hinkle as an overwhelmingly believable Grandpa Profater. Excellent dual-role by Darryl Strohl as Alonzo, Sr. AND choreographer! The two younger sisters, Tootie & Agnes, (played by real sisters Kate & Sarah Jaques-Jones) were hit-and-miss. The lines that were understandable were very funny, but some were quite obviously mere resuscitation. I was likewise unimpressed with Amy Jaques-Jones as Rose Smith, who seemed very unsure of herself and her character. A nice soprano voice but with slightly underwhelmed delivery. Overall a highly enjoyable production. There were a few lengthy set changes, and at times the orchestra was MUCH too loud over dialogue - but this is definitely a holiday classic I'd recommend. I hope to come back again!

**Review:** What a beautiful, lush production. No teenage angst ripping your ears apart, just good, old fashioned entertainment and escapism as only a Judy Garland vehicle can give you. Kay Hight does a brilliant job as Esther, capturing all the Garland charm and energy without making it an impression or send-up. I have seen several Runaway productions and its refreshing to see a new leading lady; in my opinion, especially one who can actually act. The rest of the ladies in the family don't fare as well as the men: Grandpa is quirky and cheeky; Papa is appropriately brusque but you can see his love for his family; Lon Jr. is charming. The costumes are lovely, and most of the hats place you immediately in the era. The

choreography is lively, well-performed, and uses several nods to period dance forms, especially in party at the house. The direction makes every use of the comedy in this gem of a script. The orchestra is beautiful, tho often too loud when the actors are speaking and the occasional brass flub is a little jarring. An uneven production, but overwhelmingly a hit!

**Review:** This is a old fashion fun play full of catchy songs. Of course with any Runaway Stage production the dance scenes are fantastic !! As the play starts we meet the Smith's, an extended family living in St. Louis. The time period is a few months before the Worlds Fair, which is being held in St. Louis. The plays main focus in on two of the daughters who are at the courting stage of their lives. All is great in St. Louis until the Dad announces he's being promoted to New York. No one else in the family see this as good news. The play features many good performances, including Joshua James who should actually move to New York and star in Broadway Plays. ( I hope he doesn't as I enjoy watching him locally ) I would strongly encourage those who love Broadway musicals to see this play !!

**Review:** This was my first show at RSP. I was quite excited and ready to see a wonderful show. I was not disappointed, mostly. The set was a little disappointing, with a jarringly large trolley, but the costumes and actors more than made up for it. The costumes, for the most part were lovely and I applaud the costumer for the ability to dress so many cast members so appropriately for the era of the show. The hats were the best and brought you right into the mood of the show. The only exception was the red dress that Esther was wearing at the ball. It seemed a trifle out of place, even though I understand that she is being highlighted as the lead, it was not cohesive with the rest of the actors in that scene. My only real issue with any of the costumes is the wigs. I don't quite understand the rainbow array of hair colors for the Smith family. As for the actors, Kay Hight did a very nice job as Esther with a lovely voice that was very pleasant to listen to. Esther's wig, however, is very distracting and hides how pretty Ms. Hight is underneath all that hair. Also, her eye make-up does not play well from an audience perspective and I would suggest a redesign. I especially enjoyed the performance of Ben Herrera who played Lon Smith. Listening to him sing, I wondered why he had not been cast in the role of John Truitt. His performance in "Banjo" had the audience tapping their toes and smiling throughout. Although Tyler Robinson was very capable of the role he seemed to lack something that I saw in Mr. Herrera. Mr. Robinson sang very capably and did a very adequate job as John Truitt, but just did not have the charisma necessary for this role. Joshua James did a nice job as Warren Sheffield, but this character was rather forgettable. Amy Jacques-Jones as Rose was very disappointing, with a one dimensional performance and her voice lacked substance and power. More importantly, her wig gave her a hard look that made her look older than she so obviously is. Sarah Jones as Agnes was very funny and held her own quite nicely, but her sister, Kate Jones, as Tootie was often very hard to hear. However, they were both quite sweet and very enjoyable to watch. The rest of the family was great, but I do take exception to an Irish maid without an Irish accent. Trey Hinkle as Grandpa Prophater was appropriately silly, goofy, loving and sweet and lights up the stage when he appears. The rest of the actors do a fine job in their roles and carry the show quite nicely. The show is a little slow in parts, but things jazz up once the ensemble comes on stage. Several of the ensemble members have bit parts that are very funny and I hope to see them in future shows. The set changes were a little cumbersome, but will improve as the show runs. All in all, a very nice way to spend the evening or a Sunday afternoon. I recommend taking time to come see this show. The entire cast convenes in the lobby at the end of the show and you can tell them how much you've enjoyed yourself.

**Review:** Overall, a very well-done production, though somewhat uneven. Costumes were absolutely beautiful. Kay Hight, as Esther, has a beautiful voice, and her strong acting suits her role well. Ben Herrera, Lon, puts a nice twang into his songs (which is appropriate, with the songs he has to sing!) and also has a strong voice. The grandfather, Trey Hinkle, does a great job but doesn't stick out like many other characters do. Anne-Marie Pringle as the maid (Katie) has a wonderful voice, although her song is rather oddly placed in the show. (Blame the show, not the actors or director.) The two little girls (Sarah and Kate Jones) are a little quiet, but their acting is adorable and well-done. Joshua James as Warren Sheffield plays his role well, making it memorable despite its small size. The three guys at the party whom Esther dances with are also very memorable and make the audience roll in their seats. I have saved three important roles for the end of this. Amy Jacques-Jones, Rose, is a strong actress. Her voice is beautiful, but unfortunately it is difficult to hear sometimes. Either she needs to project more, or her microphone needs to be turned up. When you can hear her, though, her voice is beautiful. Tyler Robinson as John Truitt likewise acts well, and his voice too sounds great. His volume is great, but unfortunately, his enunciation left me scratching my head over what the lyrics were. Amy Weichert, Anna Smith (the mother) gave a weak performance on her first song. However (silver lining) she did sound much better in the second act, so it is likely this was a fluke, and I hope many people go see the show and prove me wrong about her performance!

**Review:** Kenny Sharman as Sidney Pervous and Kirstin Haag deliver such great charm to their roles, whenever they say a line i couldn't help but to smile! Go see the show. HURRY!

**Review:** I loved it. This show was overall very entertaining. The only flaw would be in casting and wiggling. I found the women's wigs extremely distracting, obviously fake, and downright ugly. The characters are supposed to be teenagers and these actresses are obviously much older and the wigs didn't help. I'm sure it's also difficult to find talented children. And the trolley construction was a little odd. Mostly good singing and dancing though.

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