

“URINETOWN “: Are These Actors Really Teachers?

If it makes those of you hung up on the title of this play (if, in fact, you do exist) feel any better, let me start out by saying that URINETOWN doesn't really exist as such. We're told by the narrator/officer Lockstock (masterfully played by Mario Mabrucco) in Act One that it's "a mysterious place we'll see in Act Two." But what ultimately happens is that we come to realize that URINETOWN is just a metaphor for the terrible place to which people are sent when they try to buck the establishment, i.e., the Corporation which dominates and controls their lives. For URINETOWN, the musical play, is actually about corporate greed and how it robs people of basic human needs and dignity." It's a tool I use to enforce my agenda" says Caldwell B. Cladwell, the arch villain who represents the mighty corporation, bent on raping the lands and privatising natural resources (like water) which should belong to everyone but don't. Hence the poor line up to pay a fee to pee.

Somewhere along the way, the insidious corporation has crept in and stolen their rights from underneath them without anyone really noticing them gone. In this role, Pat Elia (playing Cladwell), is nothing short of inspired. His instructions to his company underlings and the corrupt police around him are "keep the pee off the ground, look the other way and let us run the company the way we see fit." Hence it has become, as the clever song says, "a privilege to pee." The poor protest the fee, but not too strongly, as they've become beaten down, marginalized and are numb to the thought of anything changing in their world for the better. Their ear to the corporation is Penelope Pennywise, played by Julianna Ozorio, a hugely talented actress who is simply a tour de force on stage. She keeps the chumps in line and advises them to keep the status quo....or they'll be sent to URINETOWN, a threat which inspires fear in all. Throughout the play, a running commentary on the state of affairs is given by Officer Lockstock and a character by the name of "Little Sally ", played by the gifted Megan Slater. It was she and her superb performance that left me wondering shortly after the brilliant opening number " URINETOWN", whether the talented performers were really teachers by day. I mean how could this be? (Are they like this in the classroom?)

The fly in the corporate ointment comes in the form Bobby Strong , played by Steve Nadon, who tackles his role with such heart and force of will that no one can argue his point (I couldn't...) that NOW is the time for revolution and a restoration of a world where " freedom reigns instead of fear". Despite being called " a rabble rousing son of a convicted criminal " (his father , Old Man

Strong, played by the wonderful Paul Coady, is arrested for peeing in the street because he doesn't have the fee), young Bobby is able to rouse the laden spirits of the townspeople when he sings the outstanding song " Look at The Sky". Another blow to Cladwell comes in the form of his lovely daughter, Hope, who not only falls in love with Bobby, but is transformed by him from an uncaring , spoiled woman to an activist whose heart is moved enough to champion the poor and work against her father. Michelle Cabral has an exquisite voice and a talent that suggests years of experience.

I am a lover of Broadway musicals but URINETOWN is truly one of the few intelligent ones I've ever seen. The script doesn't merely chronical past events, it is provocative and unrelenting in its point that injustice doesn't have to reign supreme. The entire cast is utterly focused and driven to allow the play to make its point, and it does so because they deftly bring out the message of love and hope which is at the core of the overall message. First time director John Zachar is astonishing in his instinctive ability to make it all work; I can only imagine what we can expect as his natural expertise continues to grow. The play is funny, the music is great (under the careful direction of Anne Bolger), and woven through it are clever allusions to other musicals from West Side Story to the obvious, Les Miserable's. The choreography (Jeff Mayne and Nicole Toogood) dazzles. The costumes (Marilyn Burke, Marta Musij-Buckley, and Linda Vachon) reflect the sorry state of the downtrodden: muted browns and yellows which enhance the dusty backdrop of "The poorest Urinal in Town ".

By now you realize I can't say enough good about this wonderful production. It DOES inspire one to think, but it also bears witness to what a talented group of people can accomplish when they put their hearts and souls into every moment. I am more than impressed. I am overwhelmed that these people would take the time, and make the effort, to teach us about what's really important in our world. Hats off to all of them.

I understand here are still tickets available for upcoming shows. RUN, don't walk, to get some before somebody else beats you to it.

Blair Duckworth, Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts - June 7th, 2015