

La Cage Aux Folles

Under the direction of Riley Spadaro, there was a lot of focus on the camp, the sparkly and the loud. The work epitomised the bright colourful world of a stage full of drag performers, however didn't truly honour the dramatic potential of the work. For a work that has historically done so much for the telling of queer stories, I was surprised to see the production opting stylistically for exaggerated expression rather than genuine and heartfelt exploration. Set in the French seaside town of St Tropez, there seemed to be little focus on maintaining consistency within any accent as the changing between French, English, American and Australian sounds detracted from individuals, as well as the overall performance. The performance felt like a tribute to drag, it exalted the bright and colourful, exaggerated and exciting and extremely engaging.

Under the baton of Musical Director Craig Renshaw, the music carried the work brilliantly in Sydney's stunning State Theatre. Made up of a relatively small ensemble, the band felt like a character in itself, so it was fantastic being able to see them throughout the work. This choice allowed the audience some insight into what usually happens below the stage in the pit, particularly seeing the swift and frequent instrument changes from the woodwind players Graham Jesse and Greg Larielle-Jones.

Grace Deacon's set design remained simplistic and easily readable throughout the evening. The band performed at the back of the stage up on risers, behind a sheer or sometimes opaque curtain that was visible behind the actors. Scenes transitioned well with simple changes of backdrop curtain and furniture or decoration, alternating clearly between being backstage at the club, on stage at the club and in the family apartment.

Performing the role of Albin was Paul Capsis. His performance was funny, dramatic and striking. In the role of Georges was Michael Cormick. A veteran to the musical theatre stage, Cormick gave an energetic and hilarious performance. While his rich, velvety timbre filled the stunning theatre, it lacked the emotional depth and musical nuance that I've come to expect from him. Particularly in 'Song On The Sand', it felt like a missed opportunity to showcase the extent of his emotional and vocal prowess. Cormick had a beautiful and natural on-stage chemistry with both his lover Albin, and son Jean-Michel, which fuelled their charming duet 'With Anne On My Arm'. In the role of Jean-Michel was Noah Mullins who brought a stillness and 'straightness' that contrasted so well with the rest of his family members. His performance was understated, and I found he had a really natural watchability.

Les Cagelles wove the show together with a humorous and colourful performance. At times their group numbers felt a bit messy and under-rehearsed, however their unique personalities shone as we got to see them 'off stage' and untucked, and this made the lack of uniformity feel less out of place and more charming. James Browne's costumes saw them dressed in bold, bright, ravishing showgirl outfits, which worked brilliantly on stage.

The show holds incredible significance for the LGBTQIA+ community as it was the first Broadway musical to feature both of its' lead roles in outwardly homosexual roles. While this production didn't emphasise the challenging themes, it exalted the flamboyant hero in this extravagant, stylised, drag-centric performance.

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