

## **A Grand Night For Theatre Thanks To Rodgers, Hammerstein and Our Own**

**By Kerry Corrigan**

**VIEW Magazine**

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It really is A Grand Night for Singing when the Hamilton Theatre Inc. cast hit the stage for their musical review of the same name.

Walter Bobbie and musical arranger Fred Wells have taken many familiar, and a few not so familiar, songs from the magnificent canon of Rodgers and Hammerstein and reformatted them for this look, once again, at the vagaries and transitions of love (see also I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change on a similar topic).

They certainly had plenty of top-notch material to choose from, with 11 musicals by the pair, a few of which stand as constantly revisited classics, including Oklahoma, The Sound of Music, The King and I and South Pacific.

Bobbie and Wells take the songs out of their traditional framework, however, for a fresh cast on the luscious music that Richard Rodgers put to sprightly lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II; the result is an evening of easy listening that leaves the audience with a warm glow.

The episodic framework isn't played up much in HTI's production—the impression is more of a straight medley of music—and that's just fine. For the most part, the talent on stage at HTI's studio theatre was up to the grand challenge of the songs, offering plenty of chances to shine.

Lyla Miklos makes the strongest impression, both in singing and comic appeal. She displays her natural comedic skill in hilarious numbers like "Shall We Dance?", which turns the lovely ballroom dance of Anna and her King, into a silly duet of mismatched proportions with Steven B. Andrews.

Andrews sings the nuns' song "Maria" and goes the other way, transforming the postulate's comic ditty into a forlorn love lament.

Later Miklos brings her strong voice to "It Might As Well Be Spring" from State Fair, and the round notes reverberate throughout the room.

Barbara Fisher complains that "he'll never belong to me" in "The Gentleman is a Dope," and we concur.

Cameron Moncur leads the cast in a rousing "Honey Bun," which included an air band, and teams with Pamela Marques for an updated rendition of the corny chestnut "The Surrey With The Fringe on Top."

Director Sharon Reynolds also "staged," as opposed to "choreographed," yet she has the group displaying some nicely timed dance moves that perk up the numbers.

Vocalist Donna Dunn Albert has also guided the cast well, although occasionally the voices weren't strong enough to deliver the goods, with some ending notes not sustained to fruition. But in this small venue with such easy-going performances, a few minor flaws don't sabotage the creative impact of the whole.

Costume designer Beryl Harrison puts two of the women in matching dresses, colour-coordinated to the men's shirts and ties, and then contrasts Miklos in an attractive pant suit and over-sized jewelry. It works, setting Miklos somewhat apart to do what she does best, providing much of the comic contrast.

An attractive outdoor set of stone walls, painted trees and twinkly stars by Tom Levely is lit with plenty of imagination by Bob Reynolds, as Angela Bailey and her band provide the rocking accompaniment side-stage.

A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING Music and Lyrics by Rodgers and Hammerstein Through April 23  
HAMILTON THEATRE INC. HTI Studio Theatre, 140 MacNab St. N. 905.522.3032.