

Good, Just Not Brave Enough
By Gary Smith
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You can't be timid with Falsettos. It's just so out there.

It's probably not shocking in 2013 to have a man who leaves his wife and son for a male lover at the core of a musical. After all, Andrew Lloyd Webber's latest London show is about Christine Keller and the Profumo affair.

In truth, Falsettos (music and lyrics by William Finn, book by James Lapine, inexplicably not credited on the HTI program) is pretty straightforward.

An amalgam of four off-Broadway William Finn shows, this one combines music and storylines to create a more compact, sung-through production.

At HTI, the music is smartly played by Charlie Henderson's band and the show's songs are well sung. Rising out of the AIDS crisis in New York, when the media called the disease a gay plague, Falsettos is edgy theatre. Like the plays *The Normal Heart*, *Angels In America* and *As Is*, Falsettos attempts to bring focus to what happened when gay men were dying of something frightening.

It's a tough theme so if Falsettos is going to work perfectly it demands utter honesty.

Hamilton Theatre Inc.'s production, directed by Sharon Reynolds, avoids some serious sentimental clichés.

Melissa Todd and Lyla Miklos are outstanding as, "the lesbians next door", creating a sense of truth in everything they say and do. Todd's Cordelia, the "Kosher caterer", looks smashing in red wig and snazzy outfits. She oozes simple, but sweet love for her mate Dr. Charlotte, played with ingratiating edge by Miklos.

Beth Rogers-Casey as Trina, the passed-over wife, has a voice that drives a door wedge through your heart. She never opts for a sad, overwrought veneer, choosing instead to find the courage and heartbeat of a woman caught in a triangle not of her own making.

Dustin Jodway as the gentle psychiatrist Mendel pushes too hard, forcing his voice into uncomfortable areas. He does add energy to HTI's show, even if he doesn't quite capture Mendel completely.

Jake Sim, as Marvin and Trina's son Jason, has some nice moments, finding the strength and growing maturity of a boy more perceptive than the other male characters on stage.

That brings us to what is a serious hole in this very worthy production.

If Marvin is so infatuated, so desperate to love Whizzer, why do these men come across as little more than friends? Surely they ought to look at each other with hunger. Surely they ought to touch each other with longing. They don't, you see, even when they're alone. Embarrassed touches and pull away kisses lack passion.

Stephen Koshurba as Marvin and Greg Solomon as Whizzer give earnest performances. Somewhere along the way though, they haven't come to terms with who these men are. You can't be timid with Falsettos. As it stands it's a good production. Thing is though, it had all the ingredients to be a very brave one.

FALSETTOS

Who: Hamilton Theatre Inc.

When: Nov 23, 28, 29, 30 @ 8pm, Matinee Nov 24 @ 2pm

Where: HTI Studio, 140 MacNab St N

Tickets: \$25, Students and Seniors \$22

Call: 905-522-3032 or hamiltontheatre.com

Gary Smith has been writing about theatre and dance for The Hamilton Spectator for more than 30 years