

**REVIEW: ANNE OF GREEN GABLES – THE MUSICAL**  
**BY BRIAN MORTON**  
**FACEBOOK**  
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Book by Donald Harron,  
Music by Norman Campbell  
Lyrics by Donald Harron, Norman Campbell,  
Elaine Campbell and Mavor Moore.  
Adapted from the 1908 novel by L. M. Montgomery

Performances:  
February 13, 20, and 27 at 7:30 pm  
February 14, 21, 22, 28, and March 1 at 2:00 pm  
Hamilton Theatre Inc. Studio Theatre  
140 MacNab Street North,  
Tickets: 905-522-3032 or at [hamiltontheatre.com](http://hamiltontheatre.com)



For those who have never actually seen Lucy Maud Montgomery's charming heroine Anne, (spelt with an "e"), live on stage, this production offered a

welcome opportunity. Unless you already had tickets, that is. Hamilton Theatre Inc's mounting of ANNE OF GREEN GABLES – THE MUSICAL is, by most accounts, already sold out, but it remains worth documenting as another example of the company's consistent ability to deliver polished, heartfelt work on an intimate scale.

I went into the show unfamiliar with the score. There are no obvious show stopping hit numbers, but that proves beside the point. Norman Campbell's music and Don Harron's lyrics function primarily as storytelling tools. The songs ground us firmly in the social rhythms of turn of the twentieth century Prince Edward Island, creating a gentle but effective musical landscape that supports character and narrative rather than overwhelming them.

The material itself sits comfortably alongside works such as REBECCA OF SUNNYBROOK FARM and POLLYANNA, stories populated by spinsters, farmers, and displaced children searching for belonging. What distinguishes ANNE OF GREEN GABLES is its deeply Canadian sense of place. Avonlea is not simply a pastoral backdrop but a social world with its own rules, pressures, and unexpected kindnesses.



At the emotional centre of the musical is the adoptive triangle of Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert and the child they never expected. When the elderly siblings request a boy to help on the farm and instead receive a talkative red headed orphan girl from Nova Scotia, their orderly lives are permanently disrupted. Matthew immediately warms to Anne's imaginative spirit, while Marilla initially resists the upheaval. The dramatic tension of the piece grows directly from this push and pull between caution and compassion.

Everything in this production ultimately depends on the young actor playing Anne, and I am happy to report that Lily Galivan rises to the considerable challenge. The role demands vocal stamina, emotional openness, and a fearless embrace of sincerity. Galivan delivers a performance that is unabashedly theatrical and occasionally melodramatic in the best sense of the word. Her Anne is impulsive, verbose, and deeply felt. The red wigs may look a touch artificial under the lights, but the emotional truth of the character lands cleanly. It is difficult not to be drawn into her orbit.

She is strongly supported by Al Helsdon as Matthew Cuthbert. Helsdon brings a gentle stillness to the role that anchors many of the production's most moving moments. His Matthew listens more than he speaks, and that quiet decency becomes one of the evening's emotional touchstones. Lyla Miklos offers a well judged Marilla, beginning from a place of firm practicality and gradually revealing the character's buried tenderness. Together, the three performers create the beating heart of the show.

The wider community of Avonlea is effectively realized by the supporting cast. Gregory Sokil's Gilbert Blythe provides an appealing intellectual foil for Anne, while Amanda Ramirez brings warmth and sincerity to Diana Barry, Anne's first and truest friend. Around them, the ensemble keeps the stage in near constant motion, shifting fluidly between the Bennett general store, the village square, and the Sunday school picnic. There are no weak links in the group work, which is essential in a piece that depends so heavily on community texture.

As I have written before, it remains remarkable what Hamilton Theatre Inc can achieve on what is essentially a postage stamp sized stage. Director Mallory Toye maintains a lively pace throughout and demonstrates a clear understanding of the musical's tonal balance. She is well supported by Erika Bennett's choreography, which adds movement and shape without overwhelming the storytelling.

Musical director Jennifer Ferreira leads a tight sounding offstage ensemble that keeps the score flowing smoothly. The design elements are similarly well coordinated. Maddie Merrill's scenic and props work makes efficient use of the limited playing space, while the costumes by The Muses nicely evoke the period world of Avonlea. Max Herman's lighting adds warmth and clarity, and Kayla Jensen's movement coordination helps maintain visual flow. Producer Haleigh Wallace and stage manager Graham Clarke clearly keep the many moving parts running on time.

Everything about this production feels earnest and heartfelt. It is clear that the company approaches this beloved Canadian musical with genuine affection. I am told the run is already sold out, which makes this review somewhat academic in practical terms. Still, reviews also serve as part of the historical record of a community's theatrical life. In that spirit, this staging of ANNE OF GREEN GABLES – THE MUSICAL stands as another solid achievement for Hamilton Theatre Inc.