



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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CRAZY FOR YOU

Therry Dramatic Society

Arts Theatre

Until 11 June 2011

Review by Aaron MacDonald

Classic George & Ira Gershwin musical pastiche. Top notch production values. Brilliant performances – Brady Lloyd as lead Bobby Child, Fiona DeLaine as love interest Polly Baker and Rodney Hutton as hilarious villain Lank Hawkins.

It's the same old story, but it's the getting there that's the fun – hearts broken, loves found, mistaken identities, hilariously bad jokes and more recognisable songs than you can poke a cane at. Oh, and about 800 tap numbers (and let's face it, everything is better with tap dancing).

Brady Lloyd is Bobby Child, scion of the wiggest bankers in Yew Nork. Though all he wants to do is sing and dance on Broadway, he is sent by his battleaxe mother (a delightful slice of ham from Pam O'Grady) to Deadrock, Nevada, to foreclose the mortgage on a theatre belonging to bucolic Polly Baker (Fiona DeLaine). He instantly falls in love (natch) but Polly wants nothing to do with him, being the wig banker that he is; so he dresses up as Broadway impresario Bela Zangler (John Rosen) to put on a big Broadway show in the Podunk town and save the theatre.

Lloyd has an absolute ball with the role; he enjoys playing it and it shows. In a way he is Bobby Child: you can tell he is just dying to burst into song and dance with every step across the stage. He's a great performer and it's a joy to watch. He's got some brilliant moments and an all-round great performance.

Fiona DeLaine is charming, lovely and deadpan hilarious as Bobby's yes-no-yes-no-yes love interest and de facto leader of the Deadrock townfolk. She gets the standout number, the showstopping "I Got Rhythm" which degenerates (like most of the other numbers) into a massive tap free-for-all.

Bobby's impersonation ruse hits a snag when the real Bela Zangler, a Florenz Ziegfeld cardboard cutout, shows up, played bombastically by John Rosen, threatening to steal the scene every time he appears. When the two meet face-to-face (so to speak) Lloyd and Rosen chew an obscene amount of scenery trying to out-act each other. But the pair are given a run for their money in the acting stakes by the superb Rodney Hutton as long-suffering saloon owner and designated villain, Lank Hawkins, who is just a moustache twirl short of tying Lillian Gish to the railroad tracks and, at one point, does (literally) eat a piece of the set. Lank, in true theatrical fashion, ends up with Bobby's frustrated fiancée Irene, played by Michelle Nightingale, and everyone lives happily ever after. Especially the audience, who see too much and not enough of Nightingale's assets in the very naughty "Naughty Baby". Miaow!

You can't build a good cast without a great ensemble, and the minor roles have talent in spades. Lindsay Prodea, Chris Stanfield and especially Jamie Richards are stellar as a trio of cowboys, and get numbers both hilarious ("Bidin' My Time") and inspired ("Slap That Bass"). But the standout here is Gemma Freeman as a little Follies dancer who is all-bust, no-brain and could probably carry the entire show on her pint-sized shoulders.

The choreography is smart, sexy and inspired. Linda Williams utilises absolutely every horizontal (and some that aren't) surface on the stage – floors, roofs, tables, chairs, gold pans and even a car – to stick tappers on. Props, when used are synchronised and strong.

The sets are elaborate, detailed and filled with prop gags – yet there are none of the interminable blackout scene changes that plague amateur shows. Set designer Craig Williams, scene painter Brian Budgen and lighting designer Steve Tilling are responsible for this.

Mark DeLaine's orchestra is tight and precise, as is his overall music direction. Singers and musicians flow together well and neither overpowers the other (props to sound man Tim Freedman).

This is an excellent production, and director David Sinclair and his team should be proud of what they've created. A must-see musical.