



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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FLOWERCHILDREN – THE MAMAS AND PAPAS STORY

Davine Interventionz

Star Theatre - One
Until 7 March 2015

Review by Kylie Pedler

Psychedelic swirls, peace jewellery, flower headbands, bell-bottom jeans, cheesecloth shirts.

This was the time of The Mamas and Papas!

But it wasn't all flowers, free love and musical hits ...

Writer Peter Fitzpatrick interweaves the turbulent backstage story of this 60s folk band with glimpses of their harmonious music. Unlike other musicals based on band tributes, "Flowerchildren" focuses on the people and how their personal tragedies, infidelity, sweet revenge and drug addiction influenced some of the most well-known lyrics of the 60s.

David Gauci's direction is skilful, keeping the story moving as staging changes were made by the ensemble (essential due to the production's 3-hour length) and ensuring the cast not only sounded like the Mamas and Papas but moved and interacted with the quintessence of the folk band members.

The choreography, by Shenayde Wilkinson-Sarti, encapsulates the 60s and adds just the right amount of stage fill to a production that otherwise focuses on only four cast members. Sarti has rehearsed a tight group of Hullabaloo dancers, all deserving mention: Alana Shepherdson, Fahad Farooque, Mim Sarre, Sam Davy, Fiona Aitken and herself.

The scene is set from the onset with a film montage of memorable sixties moments - Kennedy's death, Beatlemania, Kaleidoscopes. The stage is filled with foaming bubble baths and green and purple shimmering window slides (which created some good effects for the Go-Go dancers). And while "all the leaves are brown" remarkable harmonies are heard, supported by Emma Knights' talented band.

The musical focuses on the Mamas and Papas members, giving each a section of the narrative, and this enables the cast to stand out one by one, beginning with Cass Elliot (Mama Cass) played superbly by Lisa Simonetti. Her powerful vocals are all encompassing. Simonetti nailed the hilarious one-liners and balanced the joy and pain of "Dream a Little Dream of Me", Mama Cass' solo hit.

Lindsay Prodea is impressive as the band's musical genius, Papa John. Driven by love and passion, he portrayed John's arrogance and confusion well and sang an emotionally stunning "Monday Monday".

David Salter sensitively plays the alcoholic Papa Denny, the often unsung member of the band. At times his dialogue became mumbled but when singing he shone.

Fiona Delaine, Mama Michelle, is the glue that perhaps unknowingly, holds the group together by fragile strings. A show highlight was her rendition of "Dedicated to the One I Love". Delaine transitioned from the youthful, playful young girl who married at 17 to the unfaithful and still sensitive, mature woman who remains the only living band member.



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Together they are the Mamas and Papas and sing the complex harmonies effortlessly.

Another memorable production by Davine Interventionz.

Rating: 5 stars (out of 5)

(The Hullabaloo dancers mentioned were from the final night performance).