



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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BYE BYE BIRDIE

Metropolitan Musical Theatre Company

Arts Theatre

Until 21 October 2017

Review by Luke Wagner

Every generation has its teen heartthrob from Elvis to David Cassidy to Justin Bieber so what better fodder for a musical than a teen heartthrob.

Conrad Birdie has been drafted into the armed forces at the height of his fame. His manager Albert Peterson and his long term assistant Rosie Deleon decide to capitalise on this by sending Conrad to a small town in America to kiss one lucky fan before he heads to the front lines. This seems like a simple mission until Birdie's presence suddenly throws the town in to complete chaos.

"Bye Bye Birdie" is a fairly narrow in its scope. It has the appeal of "Hairspray" without the likability the characters require, but these are scripting issues. This production works within the limitations of the script to varying degrees of success. The overall presentation was patchy in spots with inconsistent accents, something that is unforgivable when American patriotism is such a strong theme. Costuming was also hit and miss with some costumes feeling very out of place for 1957 and more suited to 1987.

The set was bright, simple and effective and worked well for the show. Simple and effective panels worked perfectly for the iconic 'Telephone Hour' song. The train station was another great open set that allowed for some great group numbers. The shows choreography by Carmel Vistoli was one of the strengths of this production.

Paul Rodda was great in his anchor role of Albert Peterson. His transformation from downtrodden neurotic career man to confident and free was enjoyable to follow through the show. Celeste Barone as Rosie Deleon was good in her role, but needs to be mindful of timing during patter songs like 'An English Teacher'. Matthew Pugsley as the titular Conrad Birdie was an exceptional singer; however, his character at times lacked energy.

Guilia-Giorgina Condoluci as Kim MacAfee was a standout in her role as the teenage girl selected to kiss Conrad Birdie. She handled the humour with professionalism and her singing was brilliant.

Other standouts included Jenny Bowen as Mama Mae Patterson, Kurt Benton as Hugo Peabody and Vanessa Crouch as Ursula Merkle. The ensemble of teenage girls should also be commended for encapsulating the feeling of hysteria of meeting their idol.

This show may have needed some more fine-tuning, but it delivers audiences a fun and colourful evening. But be warned, you will have the words 'we love you Conrad' ringing in your head incessantly for days following.