



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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THE HELLO GIRLS

Therry Theatre

The Arts Theatre

Until 12 June 2021

By Helen Karakulak

Directed by Amanda Rowe, Therry Theatre's 'The Hello Girls' is an enjoyable musical that tells a fascinating story. With music and lyrics by Peter Mills and book written by Mills and Cara Reichel, 'The Hello Girls' follows the true story of US female switchboard operators in World War I. These telephonists had an immediate positive impact on communications during the war, managing phone lines in English and French, translating where necessary.

Rebecca Raymond is commanding and poised as protagonist Grace Banker, the chief operator of the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit. Raymond's vocals are delightful, as is her chemistry with her co-stars. Grace's most enthralling moments are those when she is challenged, often by Captain Joseph Riser, played by David MacGillivray. MacGillivray's physicality well-captures the captain's exhaustion and stubborn admiration for Grace. The two performers complement each other on-stage despite their characters clashes.

The relationships between the women who form the Hello Girls is an integral theme of the show, as they come together from various walks of life and put their trust in one another, sharing the excitement and trials of being the first women in the US Army.

Michelle Davy is charming as Helen Hill, a tender character with a rural background. Jenny Scarce is warm and inviting as older Bertha Hunt, eager to enter the war as her husband fights in it in his own post.

Cassidy Gaiter is brilliant as the sassy Suzanne Prevot. Her high-pitched classic New York accent, standoff-ish physicality and strong vocals captivates the audience. Her quick-wit and sharp-tongued dialogue shared with Jared Gerschwitz as Private Eugene Matterson is particularly engaging, as their relationship subplot amuses without detracting from the dominant storyline.

Eloise Quinn-Valentine gives a powerhouse performance as Louise LeBreton. The youngest of the girls, Louise is fluent in French, having been raised there before moving to the US. Quinn-Valentine's accent and characterisation is hard to fault, with stand-out vocals particularly as she performs 'Je M'En Fiche' in the first act.

The ragtime and jazz score is lively and well executed by the band, conducted by musical director Mark DeLaine. Choreography by Kerry-Lynne Hauber is effective and fun in this well-staged performance. Set design by David Lampard and lighting design by Greg Donhardt is well-utilised and understated, pairing well to provide depth to the performance.

Despite the occasional misstep, faltering accent or brief stutter over dialogue, when this ensemble is on track they shine. A particularly notable performance of the company is in song of the show's namesake, 'The Hello Girls', of Act 1 which can't help but garner smiles.



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With high-energy from the cast, this production effectively delivers a bouncy and fun performance where appropriate without underselling the solemn and serious nature of the story. Therry Theatre has produced a hit of a history lesson.