



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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THE PRODUCERS

Marie Clark Musical Theatre

The Arts Theatre
Until 24 July 2021

By Helen Karakulak

It's always good fun to see a show as outrageously satirical as "The Producers" and Marie Clark's production is no exception, with incredibly amusing performances that make you question whether you should giggle or gasp.

"The Producers" is a Mel Brooks musical with quite the reputation, boasting two film versions, an Oscar for best screenplay, 12 Tony Awards and an international cult following. The show's clever commentary on the ethics of Broadway and the entertainment industry is sugar-coated in silly gags, cheap shots and vulgarity.

The plot follows desperate Broadway producer Max Bialystock, played by Sam Davy, and his mild-mannered accountant turned partner Leo Bloom, played by Kristian Latella. The duo are on a quest to produce Broadway's biggest failure after Leo discovers that with some creative accounting, a show that flops can make more money than a hit.

So, the two carry out a scheme to produce a gloriously offensive flop titled, "Springtime for Hitler". The premise of this play within a play is lunacy and poor taste, so few escape stereotypes and objectification; particularly women, the elderly, the gay community, the disco group the Village People, and of course – Germans. Given the nature of satire it's almost beside the point to worry about these portrayals, but it offers interesting food for thought because even in dark comedy – where should we draw the line?

Latella is brilliant as Leo, bringing a frantic energy to the anxious character. Davy has a commanding stage presence and is clearly comfortable as the confident Max. Together, the duo have good chemistry and powerful vocals, with their voices blending together particularly well when harmonising.

Gus Smith plays Franz Liebkind, the neo-Nazi playwright of "Springtime for Hitler" and defender of Hitler's butch qualities. Smith's melodramatic characterisation is fantastic, garnering plenty of laughs. It must be noted that set design by Matt Smith and Jen Bais was effective throughout, but our introduction to Franz and his cage of birds did particularly well in assisting the comedy of the scene.

Other highlights include the endearing Lucy Trewin as the optimistic actress, dancer and seductress, Ulla and the commanding Barry Hill as the flamboyant director, Roger Debris.

Diverse accents were a feature of the main cast's performance, and were done very well on the whole, with only brief issues with enunciation in the first act.

The ensemble brought high-energy and although there were some occasionally shrill high notes and ill-timed dance steps, they recovered well and didn't detract from the otherwise engaging performance. Some lacklustre moves struggled to captivate audiences in the lengthier dance breaks, but for the most part choreography by Mike Lapot is effective and pairs well with the creative, high-quality costumes by



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Casey Von Einem, particularly in larger ensemble numbers. The frenzied "Along Came Bialy" and the chorus line of showgirls that accompanied Latella in "I Wanna Be a Producer" were particular standouts.

Overall, Marie Clark's production of "The Producers" is expectably outrageous, with a strong cast that devours slapstick and caricature in an unapologetic performance.