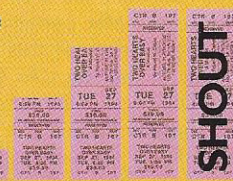


Cabell & Baillie "On Stage" Rating System

1/4 Ticket The Curtain Rose
1/2 Ticket Saw Both Acts
3/4 Ticket Was Amused
Full Ticket Worth the Price
SHOUT Don't Miss It



SHOUT

RAGTIME

CABELL - 3/4 Ticket
BAILLIE - Full Ticket

CABELL:

Sometimes the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. With *Ragtime*, it is the opposite. It does not leave you aching and thrilled like *Side Show*, nor laughing and humming like *Pimpernel* or filled with magical wonder like *The Lion King*. It does leave you with a full appreciation for the fine craftsmanship of theatre. It is historical and political pageantry at its finest, yet it can't hold a candle to *1776*. A dark and lush, yet humorless, seldom joyful show. Part of the problem is that we are asked to care for and support a man who forsakes his child and the woman he loves over the trashing of his car. Yet a more handsome charmer than Brain Stokes Mitchell could not be found to play the leading role. His magnetism and rich velvet voice brings chills. Audra McDonald, as the mother of his child and ill-fated love, is glorious. (Yet again, the plot has her seldom talking and then suddenly racing through security guards to get to the President of the United States, after he has already had an assassination attempt.) Peter Friedman, as Tateh, the dream-drenched immigrant is a very well written character. He has the truest, most powerful, yet simplest moment in the show. When masquerading as a Baron, an alias he assumes when he finds success creating movies, he confesses to Marin Mazzie that he is "but a lowly, dirty immigrant who wants nothing more than to buy back the horror and suffering of his daughter's past with sunlight and beauty." All this aside, the real star of *Ragtime*, the performance that transcends the material and gives it a life beyond the sum of its parts is Marin Mazzie. No death scenes, no rage, no trips to the North Pole, no struggle to rise from poverty and yet this woman of the upper class quietly defies every rule of her social station and brings a strength and dignity to everything she says and does. With the softest words and the simplest moments she grows from a simple garden rose to a towering oak. Her "Back To Before" has all the sweep and power of a defiant Scarlet on the sunset hilltop of Tara. The sets by Eugene Lee are full of grandeur and power but lack the magic and revelations that unfold and amaze you in *Pimpernel* and the simple elegance and sheer theatricality of *Side*



Photo: Catherine Ashmore

Show. The costumes by Santo Loquasto are as poetic as the period. The lights by Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer create magic, such as the train in motion, the shimmering starry night of Tateh's triumphant motion picture revelation or Marin Mazzie's Tara-esque sunset than all the sets combined. Direction by Frank Galati was masterful and Graciela Daniele is in a class by herself. The score is full of strong lyrics and sweeping musical melodies. Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens are certainly one of the best new teams around.

BAILLIE:

Livent, Inc., who brought you *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *Showboat*, *Barrymore* and *Candide*, brings you *Ragtime*, a really big show, a star-making show. The Ford Center for the Performing Arts is unveiled with this spectacular production directed by Frank Galati and musical numbers staged by the extraordinary Graciela Daniele. A phenomenal ensemble filled this beautiful theatre with three solid hours of *Ragtime*. Set at the turn of the century, the story is about how three very different families (upper class, immigrant and black) become intertwined. This stellar ensemble was led by Brian Stokes Mitchell as Coalhouse Walker, Jr. Mitchell is as appealing a leading man as anyone could want. His rich baritone filled the theatre. His liquid grace, languid style and charming smile only added dimension to his already intense performance. Mitchell was matched with Tony winner Audra (Master Class) McDonald. I don't think I could ever tire of hearing her sing; she is exquisite. "Your Daddy's Son" is the haunting lullaby she sings to their illegitimate son. It is mesmerizing.

Mark Jacoby and Marin Mazzie are Father and Mother, the white elite. Jacoby is appropriately stodgy as the unswerving upper class man who, after a North Pole expedition returns home to find his family life forever altered. But, it is Mazzie who captures every scene she is in. Utterly bewitching and one of the best singers in theatre, her velvet voice smoothes that gap between lyric and belt. "Back to Before" fills the theatre and your heart. Much in this show is wonderful, but Mazzie alone is worth the price of admission. Does Judy Kaye ever turn in a bad performance? Not in this show. She is always a joy to watch. Jim Corti, Tommy Hollis, Lynette Perry and especially Steven Sutcliffe are notable in their supporting roles. Multiple Tony winner Terrence McNally wrote the book, Stephen Flaherty the music and Lynn Ahrens the lyrics. The production team of Eugene Lee (design), Santo Loquasto (costumes), Jonathan Deans (sound), Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer (lighting) kept the production flowing with such ease that you almost forgot how big this show is. There are some flaws in the production, but overall this ensemble turns in some of the best performances in town. Although the show gets a full ticket, the performances are something to really SHOUT about!

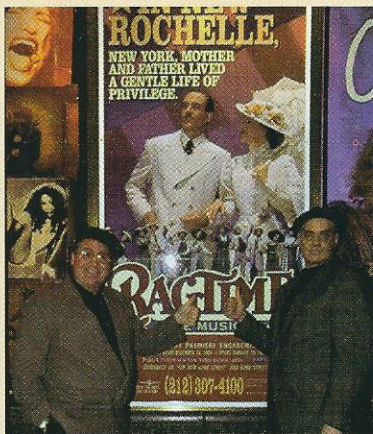


Photo: Brian Myers

Review

Review

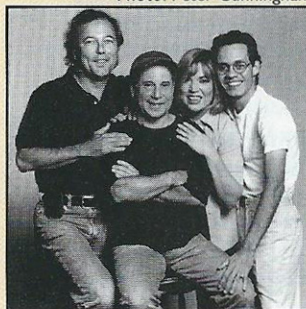
THE CAPEMAN

CABELL - 1/4 Ticket
BAILLIE - 1/2 Ticket

CABELL:

I had really looked forward to seeing this musical. After doing so, it is impossible to see *The Capeman* without comparing it to *West Side Story*. But in comparison, it crumbles. I am soooooo tired of seeing the Hispanic community - a culture as rich in music, art and literature as any in the world, with great heroes, explorers and philosophers - constantly portrayed as hoodlums. And in this production, foul-mouthed, murdering ones at that. How could soooooo much money and such great talent be wasted on this? The great score we've heard on the CD with beautiful vocal harmonies and backup singing to support melodious tunes does not translate to the stage. It appears mediocre and rambling. The lyrics are disjointed and colorless or packed with vulgarities like "Mo---r F---er suck on this" (I'm spelling it in a polite way). A musical theatre score requires much more than a few pretty tunes. It must evoke the

Photo: Peter Cunningham



emotions and tell the story. You must feel provoked, disturbed, inspired; you must feel the pain and the love of each moment in the show. If you do not truly laugh and truly cry during a show, you're not getting your money's worth. And trust me you won't get it here. Marc Anthony's fine and warm vocal talents are worthy of much better than this. The only reason I sat through the second act was in the hope that Mr. Simon, a childhood idol of mine, had created some small moment worthy of Ruben Blades. He didn't. And even a miraculous talent such as Ednita Nazario couldn't do much for a show like this. The characters do not grow. There is no mystical revelation, no change, no validation or salvation for this child of the gutter that steals the lives of two other youths and the happiness of their families. He just gets old and weary in jail, comes out and has a heart attack. Where is the book? Not only the book for the show, but the book that this man spent his time in prison writing. Why is it not a prevalent part of the show? Why is it not the reason for the show? Sadly, the cast is a fine ensemble that deserves a much better show to perform in, with the exception of Sophia Salguero. She plays Bernadette, the Capeman's gal. Pretty, perky and perennially off pitch, she got what she deserved. Natascia Diaz as Yolanda and Julio Monge as Carlos stand out amongst the ensemble, each a triple threat, actor/ singer/ dancers of fire and grace. Something this show has very little of.

BAILLIE:

What do you get when you combine a really talented cast and a lousy show? A lousy show with a really talented cast. I get no satisfaction from not liking something, in fact it kind of hurts. I know what goes into a show, the love, the sweat, the tears, the emotional investment. It is really sad when all of that adds up to a really boring evening of theatre. Paul Simon and Derek Walcott have written a show about a teenage punk who kills two kids and who shows no remorse. Even if this is a true story, why should anyone care? Recording stars Ruben Blades and Marc Anthony play Sal Agron at different stages in life. Blades, the older and wiser ex-con and Anthony, the punk. Blades' performance was lackluster. He meanders around the stage, slouches and sings. Real exciting stuff. Anthony is at least pleasant to listen to and watch. He has energy and commitment in what he does. The best performance

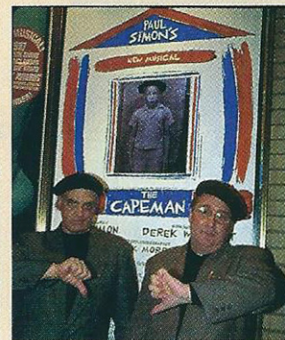


Photo: Brian Myers

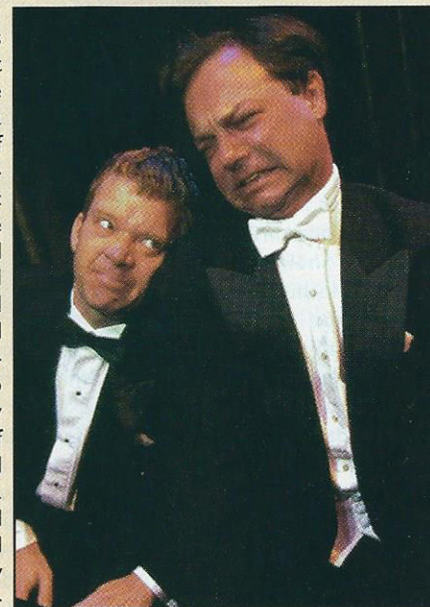
is turned in by Ednita Nazario, who plays the mother. An accomplished recording star from Puerto Rico, I waited for her to return to the stage. Her performance is complete and one of the only satisfying aspects of this production. Julio Monge has some moments in the sun. As Carlos Apache, a punk-friend, he does bring "Dance to a Dream" to life. As Bernadette, a punk-girl friend, Sophia Salguero is embarrassingly bad. I find it hard to believe this is the same actress who played Ivy Smith in *On The Town*. If you can't say anything nice. . Bob Crowley (sets and costumes) did have one stand out moment. The "Satin Summer Nights" set was clever and inventive. But, why was Sal tilted while he was singing? Was he was supposed to be laying down on the fire escape? Couldn't figure that out. The Capeman might last for a short time due to the Latin star power of Blades and Anthony. But this Bridge Over Troubled Agua will not run dry soon enough for me.

TWO PIANOS FOUR HANDS

CABELL- SHOUT BAILLIE- SHOUT

CABELL:

2 Pianos 4 Hands is currently running at the Promenade Theatre and is a delightful evening of an over-the-top, off-the-wall comedic music-ation of the world of the classical pianist. Richard Greenblatt and Ted Dykstra co-created and star in this mad-cap musical romp through pianist envy and a wild array of cantankerous and eccentric teachers. They mock Bach and put more 'Heart and Soul' into the show than you could possibly imagine. With audacious and delightful direction by Gloria Muzio, the two ivory ticklers had moments of Lucy and Ethel and Laurel and Hardy mixed together. Shaken not Stirred. It is original, enlightening and entertaining in the extreme.



BAILLIE:

What happens to classically trained pianists when they realize that a concert career is not going to happen? Canadians Ted Dystra and Richard Greenblatt have composed a symphony for the eyes and ears in *2 Pianos 4 Hands*, now at The Promenade Theatre. Standbys Jed Rees and Andrew Lipka took us through the journey from beginning piano lessons ("curve your hands. . .now lower your arms") to learning about key and time signatures (equating common time to four quarters), from being forced to rehearse ("Dad. . .the guys are playing hockey!") to being forced not to ("Son, you need to get away from music and have a life"), all the way to the ultimate audition at a prestigious conservatory. "At one point all I wanted was to get out of that little square practice room and meet some people and now all I want is to get back in." Rees and Lipka conveyed the love, respect and passion they have for music and the carriers they were never going to have. Lucky for us, they are not on the concert stage but they ARE on stage at the Promenade Theatre.