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Pippin finds meaning and stands out
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It is a deadly siren that offers up a single perfect moment of extraordinary experience in exchange for death and ruin. So too is the call to live an extraordinary life, one that stands out from the crowds, one that the bards will sing about whether they are news anchors or pop singers.

It's alluring, but deadly. So goes the message of "Pippin," a musical now playing at Coldwater's Tibbits Summer Theater.

They make a convincing case for it too.

The Leading Player (Nick Raynor) calls a Pippin (Davis Wayne) out of the audience after the original storms from the theater during the curtain speech.

The Leading Player hails Pippin as someone with extraordinary talent and leads him through the course of the play on a quest to find his purpose—to find something in life that is meaningful and will make him stand out forever.

Raynor is seductive in the role. He's a true triple threat with his commanding acting, strong singing voice and high-spirited, skilled dancing. He leaves you no doubt that the player is manipulating everything and leading Pippin right where he wants him to go.

Wayne is charming as Pippin and an easy hero to root for. His voice is sweet and he masters the difficult task of looking unrehearsed while hitting everything just right. He does occasionally get too soft and hard to hear, something that stands out because the rest of the cast is powerful in their unamplified roles.

Director and Choreographer Kevin Halpin does an excellent job of filling the stage and keeping his actors moving. The pace is engaging and makes the time scream by. The choreography is also superior from the Leading Player down to every member of the ensemble.

Halpin's hand is also seen in the excellence of the ensemble. This is a crew of actors that works well together, and each member of the band of players has something unique about him or her. They are entertaining to watch and each contributes something of interest to the story.

Corey Brittain's costuming very much helps the ensemble. There is a lot of creativity that goes into the outfits whether it is the half man/half woman costume, the 80s valley girl or the armor worn by Lewis, Pippin's step-brother. They all add to this sense of a world populated by the out-of-the-ordinary, a fitting background to an epic journey.

Derek Mellor plays Charlemagne, or Charles, an emperor and the father of Pippin. He brings strength to the role and sets a fine example of something Pippin is reaching for. Pippin's grandmother, Berthe, is given a lively turn at the stage by Gail Betts-Trader. She interacts well with the audience and draws them into singing "No Time at All" with her.

Lewis (Stuart Kofron) and Fastrada (Lizzy Palmer) make a conniving duo as Charles' new wife and her dim-witted son, both of whom want to see Lewis on the throne. Kofron embodies the necessary physicality for the part of the jock Lewis, prancing about in stark contrast to Wayne's more controlled and subdued movements. Palmer, meanwhile, is sexy and chipper in turn as she insists she is a plain, ordinary housewife, albeit one dressed in silks and satins and the wife of the supreme ruler of the land.

Jaclyn Collins does a beautiful job as Catherine, starting out shallow and building a real relationship with Pippin as the play progresses. She's paired with the young Lexi Galliers who is cute and well-prepared as Catherine's son Theo.

Aaron Lichamer has a challenge with the lighting design and it is one he meets well with plenty of specials and follow-spots along with a bouncing light to help the audience sing along. DeHay designs a set that is constantly in motion and has things flying in with each scene. There are tall stairs that allow actors to play the scenes out on multiple levels and dance vertically as well as horizontally on the stage. If they sometimes wobble a bit, the actors adjust.

Tibbits Summer Theater actors once again show that they are excellent dancers, interesting actors and strong ensemble singers. "Pippin" is filled with large dance numbers that are in turn funny, thrilling, erotic and charming. It also has its share of solos and singular stand-out performances. The summer company does justice to this complex musical and makes it a thoughtful but fun evening of theater.