

1 of 4 matches



Tibbits summer theatre re

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Fine. We took out some cash and drove to Cheap Flicks.

There were no prices on the marquee. We walked into the theater. The scent and sound of popping popcorn greeted us, prompting my kids to angle for a bucket. My youngest ran ahead, and then yelped.

"The big box of Junior Mints is only \$1!"

No kidding? That's what they cost at Meijer.

I still couldn't find any ticket prices. The young man working the counter took out a notebook.

"How many?"

Five.

"Would you like popcorn?"

Depends on how much five tickets are.

"\$15."

\$15? Bring on the popcorn!

The theater was cool and dark. The seats were comfy. The screen was big. The only thing missing was the previews and the credit card debt.

We walked out happy — squinting into the daylight and licking butter off our fingers. It was the definitive movie experience and definitely worth an encore.

Nicole L.V. Mullis can be reached at nlvm.columns@gmail.com. You can find her on Facebook or follow her on Twitter @NicoleLV-Mullis.

Tibbits' debut of 'A Chorus Line' is one singular sensation

Nicole L.V. Mullis
For the Enquirer

COLDWATER — Unity defines a good chorus line. The Tibbits Summer Theatre's debut production of "A Chorus Line" is good for the same reason. Its cast, crew and musicians move as one.

The story opens on a routine chorus line audition. When the director cuts the dancers to 17, he announces personal questions, not dance combinations, will determine the final eight spots. Desperate for work, these dancers bare their souls, revealing 17 individual pursuits of the same goal — to dance as long as possible.

"A Chorus Line" netted nine Tony Awards in 1975 as well as the 1976 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante wrote the book, Marvin Hamlisch wrote the music and Edward Kleban wrote the lyrics. The material is ambitious, but director and choreographer Kevin Haplin's team handles it with grace.

The cast is balanced, each



Nate Klingenberg as Zach, Christina Laschuk as Cassie, Alexander Rodriguez as Paul and Devon Frieder as Val in "Chorus Line." PROVIDED

member bringing a distinct sense of character without upstaging anyone. Dance skills ranging from make-do to can-do enhance the audition feel. When they dance as a group, however, these distinctions disappear. Their harmonization is gorgeous, flush with skin-tingling sound.

The opening number "I

Hope I Get It" sets the tone — chilling descants, choreographed chaos, ragtag desperation. The closing reprisal of "One" finishes strong — gold costumes, Broadway sound, unified footwork. In-between are fabulous ensemble numbers that prove the "company" is the star of this show.

The dance standouts in-

IF YOU GO

» **WHEN:** 2 p.m. July 16, 8 p.m. July 17-19.

» **WHERE:** Tibbits Opera House, 14 Hanchett St., Coldwater.

» **COST:** \$10, \$28, \$32.

» **INFO:** Please note the show contains adult language and situations. For more information, contact the box office at 517-278-6029 or go to www.tibbits.org.

clude Davis Wayne, who plays Bronx toe-tapper Mike. He makes the high-energy, highly complicated tap number "I Can Do That" look easy. Ryan Blackson, who plays Larry, the director's assistant, draws the eye with his easy grace, especially when he "leads the kids" through the choreography. The acrobatic Joshua Smith, who plays almost-kindergarten teacher Richie, delivers bounce, literally, to the production.

Vocal highlights include Kelsey Peters, who plays

See THEATER, Page C6

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A photograph of draft horses at the Johnson farm held up by Evelyn Wright, who
Tibbits summer theatre re

THEATER

Continued from Page C1

down-to-earth Diana. She sets the emotional intensity for the company's heartfelt rendition of "What I Did for Love." Ashley Smith, who plays the tone-deaf Kristine, and Liam Johnson, who plays her musical spouse Al, deliver a big sound and even bigger laughs with their dizzying version of "Sing!"

Threading intensity throughout the show are Christina Laschuk, who plays standout dancer Cassie, and Nate Klingenberg, who plays director Zach. Their tortured relationship with each other and the stage peaks when Zach peppers Cassie with sharp correction during the group audition. It is brilliantly scripted — her slightly overdone movement a second before his merciless reprimand.

Charlotte Vaughn Raines owns her role as Sheila, the smart-mouthed, cynical dancer who has seen it all but can't give up the dream. Nicholas Alexander Rodriguez's portrayal of the troubled dancer Paul is vulnerable, but not overdone. When the director runs onstage to console him, you want to hug him, too.

Halpin's choreography adapts to all situations, complicated when it can

be and simple when it needs to be. The dancers use the stage well, weaving in, out and around each other — effective storytelling for numbers like "At the Ballet" and "Montage." The grand finale is full, sharp and cohesive, with Aisling Halpin receiving credit for recreating the original "One" choreography.

Equally adaptable is musical director Kristen Lee Rosenfeld. Conducting six musicians, while playing the piano, she delivers an emotionally responsive score that is clearly the best supporting actor. Occasionally, the music swallows up softer solos, especially if the singer's head turns away from the audience, but this doesn't hold true for the stronger voices.

Costume designer Kevin R. Reed, set designer Myra Giorgi and light designer Michael Blagys establish a simple, yet effective tone. The costumes fit the individual personalities while maintaining the feel of a mass audition. Gel lights, spotlights, even the houselights, create a sense of place from the intimate to the exposed. The set is the theater itself, the audience sitting in-between the director in the back corner and the dancers onstage. A distorted mirror lines the back of the stage, doubling the cast for ensemble numbers,

like "One," or concentrating focus on solo performances, like "The Music and the Mirror."

Although the individual efforts in "A Chorus Line" are laudable, it is the unselfish nature of the whole cast and crew that deserves an encore. Together, they are one singular sensation.

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DAYS OF THE PLANET OF THE APES 2D (PG-13)
12:00PM 1:00PM 3:15PM 4:15PM 6:30PM 7:30PM 9:45PM 10:30PM

DAYS OF THE PLANET OF THE APES 3D (PG-13)
12:00PM 3:45PM 7:00PM 10:15PM

AMERICA (PG-13)
11:00AM 1:40PM 4:20PM 7:00PM 9:45PM

DELIVER US FROM EVIL (R)
1:15PM 4:00PM 6:45PM 9:30PM

EARTH TO EARTH (PG)
11:00AM 2:00PM 4:30PM 6:55PM 9:30PM

TANDY (R)
11:00AM 1:40PM 4:20PM 7:00PM 9:45PM

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION 2D (PG-13)
11:15AM 3:00PM 6:45PM 10:20PM

TRANSFORMERS: AGE OF EXTINCTION 3D (PG-13)
12:15PM 4:00PM 7:45PM

JERSEY BOYS (R)
12:00PM 2:00PM

MALEFICENT 2D (PG)
4:00PM 10:10PM

MALEFICENT 3D (PG)
4:00PM 10:10PM

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30 of 58

