

Greater Lansing Ubiquitous Theatre (/)

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Review: Grease (MSU)

(http://www.greaterlansingtheatre.net/reviews/grease-msu)

4/16/2016

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MSU harks back to 1959 with the original version of version of **GREASE, the musical**, which opened on Broadway in 1971. It's a little rougher and raunchier than the 1978 movie and recent live version on Fox TV — suggesting, as dramaturg Karen Vance points out in the program, "both an homage and gritty commentary on a unique era of American teenage history" as working class teenagers navigate the rocky road of peer pressure, identity and values. Still, it's joyful and exuberant, showcasing great voices and wonderful dancing that evokes the era and kicks it up a notch with acrobatics and imaginative moves. Kudos to director/choreographer Brad Willcuts.

All voices are great, and several of the guys put Frankie Valli to shame with their soaring falsettos. Music Director Dave Wendelberger conducts and plays keyboard in a rockin' 7-piece combo. The set (Lex Van Blommenstein) is somewhat dingy and vacant, suggesting a high school that could use a rise in tax millage, but versatile with rolling pieces that make plenty of room for dancing, and the coveted car "Greased Lightning."

Highlights included an energetic, acrobatic, tough-yet-vulnerable Danny played by Lukas Jacob. Sandy (Shelby Antel) was appropriately prim and dreamy, before she absorbed the gospel according to Rizzo (a powerful Katlyn Wilson "There Are Worse Things I Could Do") and makes her transformation. A high point was the FABulous Blaine Mizer as an unexpected version of Teen Angel that foreshadowed a dash of David Bowie. He ruled the stage for his "Beauty School Dropout" number.

GREASE continues on the Pasant Stage at MSU's Wharton Center:

- Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 2:00pm
- Saturday, April 16, 2016 at 8:00pm
- *Sunday, April 17, 2016 at 2:00pm
- Wednesday, April 20, 2016 at 7:30pm
- **Thursday, April 21, 2016 at 7:30pm

Reviews

Read more about Jane and the creation of the G.L.U.T. on the "About G.L.U.T. (/about-the-glut.html)" page.

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Friday, April 22, 2016 at 8:00pm
 Saturday, April 23, 2016 at 2:00pm
 Saturday, April 23, 2016 at 8:00pm
 Sunday, April 24, 2016 at 2:00pm

* Director Pre-Show Discussion, Sunday, April 17, 2016, 1:15.
 ** Post-Show Discussion on Thursday, April 21, 2016. (Following the performance)

Tickets are available from the Wharton Center Box Office; 1.800.WHARTON;
 www.whartoncenter.com (<http://whartoncenter.com>).

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Review: The Decade Dance

(<http://www.greaterlansingtheatre.net/reviews/the-decade-dance>)

4/9/2016

0 Comments (<http://www.greaterlansingtheatre.net/reviews/review-the-decade-dance#comments>)

3/31 - 5/1 - Williamston Theatre has another Joseph Zettlmaier world-premiere hit on their hands: **THE DECADE DANCE**.

This engaging new script hits that sweet spot between the heart and the brain. Nina, an African American civil rights activist, hooks up with Roger, during a Kent State rally. Their one-night stand turns into a ten-year trip, cleverly intertwined with historical events and social issues. These two are figuring out who they are as our country does some growing up, too. The history never seems forced, but acts as a natural backdrop helping us get to know these people.

Those of us who lived through the 70s will bring our own historical backdrop, so we can more easily relate to this unlikely couple. They “dance” through the decade in ten specifically dated scenes that offer romance, history, laughs and insights. Younger audiences will also enjoy it, since the relationship between these two characters is strong enough to intrigue us, even without the nostalgia factor.

Both actors bring a genuine sincerity and charm as they grow up before our eyes. Nina Mitchenor flows naturally from righteous anger through humor and nurturing as the activist Nina. Mitchell Koory is a charming comic-book guy with “issues,” complete with that great 70’s mustache and hair.

The set (Bartley Bauer) features a wonderful arch of iconic 70s images and a versatile set of rolling couch/cube parts that become many locations. The set changes were danced into place backed by pop hits of the era (sound, Julia Garlotte). I believe the changes were done by Madelayne Shammas and Derek Ridge (listed as “crew”) who channeled a dash of disco, to the delight of the audience.

Conversation Sunday: April 24, 2016 - 4pm after the show - open to all, even those who saw the show on a different day.

www.williamstontheatre.com (<http://www.williamstontheatre.com/>)
 (517) 655-SHOW (7469)

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Review: Xtigone

(<http://www.greaterlansingtheatre.net/reviews/xtigone>)

3/31/2016

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Xtigone - MSU Arena
(guest review by T.E. Klunzinger)

Obviously in recent years I have missed a couple of things in the evolution of Modern Theater: first, the increasing use of Devised Theater, whereby you start with a basic script or concept and throw in whatever you can think of, such that every production of a given title is different; and second, you have the impulse to do a musical but the designated writer has no music (notes on a scale) to contribute, so you use rhythmic chanting, usually known as hip-hop, instead. (I understand "Hamilton" is very successful in this respect.)

"Xtigone" by the Chicago-based Nambi Kelley, MSU's Global Diversity Play currently at the Auditorium Arena through this Sunday only, is the latest local example of these two trends. It helps a lot to read the preview articles in local media, so you come in knowing that this is an adaptation of the classic Greek play "Antigone" with which I am not familiar, now set against the gun violence of gang wars in Chicago, as this show is light on plot but heavy on allegory.

That said, an energetic multiracial cast brings this show to crackling life. Jenise Cook (late of Owosso's "Ghost") is the authoritative protagonist seeking justice for the murder of her brothers, breaking into song now and then. She is pitted against her uncle Marcellus, the earnest, ambitious, well-intentioned but clueless Mayor of the City played by Greg Hunter (one of the bright lights of January's "And Away We Go.") Hunter moves effortlessly between a high-toned politician and a faux-pastor leading a revival to rally the city behind him.

Teriah Fleming steals her scenes as the mayor's lieutenant Le Roi, while Jacquese Steele impresses with her powerful singing voice (again, this is not a musical) as the mayor's advisor Tea Flake. Kristy Allen provides strong support as the mayor's seemingly stoic wife who is in truth the power behind the throne.

The rest of the dozen-plus cast functions mostly as Greek chorus, wearing matching black outfits emblazoned "Unearth the Truth." Some of them play in the onstage three-piece ensemble, one of them plays "Summertime" on a saxophone and all of them excel at the choral chanting and foot-stomping choreography.

Again, it's often difficult to distinguish between the written play and the interpolated contributions of director Shondrika Moss-Bouldin and her cast. Kelley is unsparing in her indictment of power structure, black or white. Much of the dialogue is in very real vernacular so the body mikes help. And the classic elements of Greek Tragedy are occasionally obvious, as with the Old Blind Seer and the somewhat over-the-top final scene. But overall, it's certain you've never seen anything like this before.

Xtigone continues at MSU Arena Theatre Fri 4/1-8pm; Sat 4/2-8pm; Sun 4/3-2pm (with director pre-show discussion Sunday at 1:15 pm)

Buy tickets at the box office on the Farm Lane side of the Auditorium building, then go downstairs to the Arena
\$13 general (\$11 student/senior)

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Review: Wait Until Dark (RWT)

(<http://www.greaterlansingtheatre.net/reviews/wait-until-dark-rwt>)

3/31/2016

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Riverwalk's **Wait Until Dark** brings a classic thriller to the Riverwalk stage. Director Rita Deibler has combined challenging staging, lighting, fighting, and acting to draw us into this intriguing, convoluted tale of con artists desperate to get a drug-stuffed doll from a blind woman, who is not as defenseless as she at first seems.

Suzy and her amiable photographer husband Sam (Adam Bright) demonstrate a genuine, loving relationship in their opening scene together, but then he's off on his business trip... We want to say, "Don't go!". The con men move in, establishing three distinct characters. Josh Martin seems so clean-cut, helpful and friendly, we almost forget we know he's up to no good. Micheal Phelps is imposing, and adds a note of humor, as another tricky conspirator. Spencer Perrenoud

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brings a squirrely energy and menace to his double role as Harry Roat, Junior and Senior.

Kudos to new light designer Nick Eaton for artful management of tricky lighting and strategic blackouts crucial to the suspense. I also enjoyed the period costumes (Wendy Brandell) (love the plaid pants...) and furniture/props true to the 1967 era, thanks to Ray and Melody Kurtis. (My freshman roommate had that Herb Alpert Whipped Cream album...)

Wait Until Dark continues through April 10 - 7pm Thurs. 8pm Fri/Sat, 2pm Sunday
Regular \$15 (\$12) - Bargain Thursdays \$10/\$8
Riverwalktheatre.com (<http://riverwalktheatre.com/>)
517-482-5700 (tel:517-482-5700)

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This G.L.U.T. website is created and maintained by Aaron Herrbach in collaboration with Jane Shipley Zussman.

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