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'Sandy Hackett's Rat Pack Show' resurrects memories of legendary performers

# Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer- The Musical an INSTANT HIT!



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RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED  
REINDEER, THE MUSICAL

Rating:

December 11, 2013

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*Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, the Musical at the Majestic Theatre*

RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER,  
THE MUSICAL

Script Adaptation by Robert Penola from  
the 1964 Rankin & Bass stop-motion  
animated TV special, "Rudolph the Red-  
Nosed Reindeer" ©™

Arrangements and Orchestrations by  
Timothy Splain

Wishing Star Productions

Direction by Joe Sturgeon

Music Direction by Aimee Hurst-Bozarth

Choreography and Puppeteer Supervision  
by Aubrey Adams

Sound Design by Bill Eickenloff and Ryan Mansfield

Lighting Design by Jason Foster

Costume Adaptation and Fabrication by Costume Specialists, Inc.

Scenic Adaptation and Fabrication by Dallas Stage Scenery

Puppet Design and Fabrication by Kathy Kreuter

Properties Design and Fabrication by Jane Quetin

Wig/Makeup Design and Fabrication by Steven W. Bryant

Flying Effects Provided by ZFX, Inc.

Production Stage Management by Leslie S. Allen

CAST (in alphabetical order)

Aubrey Adams as Girl Elf/Ensemble

Duke Anderson as Tall Elf/Ensemble

Kerri Brackin as Dolly/Snoken/Ensemble

Jonathan Bragg as Donner

Jordan Brodess as Rudolph

Christopher J. Deaton as Hermey

Greg Dulcie as Yukon Cornelius

Emily Ford as Mrs. Donner

Steph Garrett as Train with Square Wheels/Snoken/Ensemble

Doug Jackson as Boss Elf/King Moonracer

Jason C. Kane as Sam the Snowman

Lindsay Longacre as Spotted Elephant/Snoken/Ensemble

Doug Lopachin as Santa Claus

Paydin Lopachin as Bird Fish/Young Buck/Snoken/Ensemble

Mary McElree as Clarice

Alan Pollard as Coach Comet/Charlie-in-the-Box/Snoken/Ensemble

Mark Quach as Aviator Elf/Ensemble

Stephen Raikes as Cowboy on Ostrich/Young Buck/Snoken/Ensemble

Alyssa Robbins as Girl Elf/Ensemble

Sarah Elizabeth Smith as Girl Elf/Snoken/Ensemble

Jenny Tucker as Mrs. Claus/Snoken/Ensemble

Scott Zenreich as Fireball/Reindeer/Ensemble

Reviewed performance on Sunday December 8th, 2013

Wishing Star's inaugural production of Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer rings true to a line from the title song, "You'll go down in history!" This is a show that will go down in history... as a smashing HIT!

Presenting this musical at the historic Majestic Theatre was the perfect decision. The Majestic opened in 1921 as a vaudeville theater, converted into a movie house until 1973, was gifted to the City of Dallas in 1976 and finally fully restored and re-opened as a live performance venue in 1983. Boasting soaring gilded décor and seating 1704 patrons on three magnificent levels, this theatre is simply amazing to behold and sets a beautiful backdrop for this musical adaptation of the seasonal family cartoon special almost everyone knows and loves.

The adaptation by Robert Penola is seamless and perfectly done. It follows the iconic television special so closely you feel as if you're transported back to watching in on television (for those of us old enough to remember that moment) as a kid, wide eyed, in awe and thoroughly entertained. It is a wonderful job done by Mr. Penola and surpassed only by the live staging and simply remarkable talent.

Following suit with the adaptation are the wonderful orchestrations by Timothy Splain. He chose to keep the music recognizable yet adds beautiful new highlights and nuances for the live production. We all know how the public reacts to an iconic production being presented live (yes, you know what I'm referring to on television recently) and the inherent dangers of that pursuit. In this case however, Mr. Splain hits it out of the park in every aspect of the music. Bravo!

Direction by Joe Sturgeon is executed without flaw or distraction. The scene work is very well done, flows nicely around the large Majestic stage and highlights some beautiful intimate moments with flair and style. His seasoned professionalism as a director, playwright and actor shines throughout and it is very clear his performers are with him and his artistic vision every step of the way. I remember the original stop animation special very well and Mr. Sturgeon manages to recreate those magical television moments. The musical is very stylized in its presentation, mimicking everything from the designs of the locations, costumes and even the characters. Every aspect is done with perfection and kept everyone at the reviewed performance engaged and just plain excited. I periodically looked around to see how everyone from children to adults reacted to the performance and never once did I see an uninterested face. In fact, most were smiling broadly, a sign of an extraordinary job in direction.

Aimee Hurst-Bozarth's musical direction is executed flawlessly. She is offered an amazing

array of talent to work with and it is obvious she took every opportunity to make that talent shine! The vocals are perfect, well balanced and stylized to sound like the original television special. You could close your eyes during some moments (as I did) and think you were actually listening to the TV show. It is very obvious a lot of research, dedication and hard work went into her musical direction and Ms. Hurst-Bozarth's efforts come alive with great success in the production.

Costume and scenic design by Costume Specialists, Inc. and Dallas Stage Scenery are, again, perfectly aligned pieces in the puzzle of this production's success. Sets move around with ease, locations mimic the original television show and unique additions are added to make the animation come alive. Every moment is special and well executed. The highly detailed costuming only adds to the iconic characters coming to life. Every detail, from Hermey's hat to Yukon Jack's moving mustache, and yes, Rudolph's glowing nose, are perfect and take you even further into this imaginary realm with ease and unabated enjoyment.

Sound design by Bill Eickenloff and Ryan Mansfield, paired with Jason Foster's lighting design, are another set of creative teams adding to the success of the musical. With effects that sound like they are straight from the animation to lovely new additions, all fully involve you in the action on stage. The vocals are balanced, well amplified and never once a distraction. Moving lighting fixtures and tightly aligned specials also create magical visual moments throughout the production. From the spectacular, color-changing giant snowflakes at preshow and intermission that bask the entire proscenium and ceiling of the Majestic in visual splendor to the subtly moving Northern Lights on the upstage cyclorama while scenes are at the "North Pole", every lighting element is a visual masterpiece!

Another spectacular part of the show that deserves immense praise is the puppet design. Every character from the animated show is duplicated with one-hundred percent excellence! Great detail has gone into every aspect, from the misfit toys to the GIANT bumble when he appears on stage. None are cheaply done, badly designed or off the mark. These creations are award worthy and I'm sure will win many in the future of this production. I was simply amazed and in awe of every new puppet character as it was revealed. Trust me; you're going to love King Moonracer when he appears!

Overall, every technical and design element of this production is pure excellence. It is

obvious that a lot of time, meetings and artistic creativity were involved in every aspect along the way to the spectacular presentation you will see on stage.

As for the talent on stage, in one word ... PERFECTION! Every performer is spectacular in whatever role they assume, are vocally superb and recreate these lovable iconic characters with such vitality and energy you are consistently entertained.

I could write a glowing review, in and of itself, on each and every one of the tremendously talented performers in this show. Everyone onstage brings to life the iconic characters with eerie similarities. Again, I closed my eyes at some points and while listening could actually see the television show running in my head ...that's how good the character voices are in this show. Even the songs are song in character and impress you with every note.

The title character of Rudolph, played by Jordan Brodess, is charming, well delivered and just plain "cuuuuuuuuuuuute!", as he exclaims after Clarice says he is. His voicing of the role is sublime, even down to being nasal when he is forced to cover his glowing nose. Every moment Mr. Brodess is on stage you are completely entertained and watch his every move.

Christopher J. Deaton as Hermey is remarkable in his role. Again, he vocally replicates the very difficult voice from the television show without flaw. When you watch Mr. Deaton on stage, you can actually see the cartoon play out in front of you. From his facial expressions to movements, his professionalism truly shines and you are never disappointed with his presentation.

Yukon Cornelius, played by Greg Dulcie, delivers another stand-out performance in the show. His twirling mustache and spot-on replication of the iconic voice makes you smile with wonder whenever his is on stage.

Jason C. Kane as Sam the Snowman has to be the BEST vocal imitation of the beloved Burl Ives I have ever heard. From his dialogue to songs, you will be astounded by the masterful replication of the iconic voice Mr. Kane delivers. When coupled with the wonderful costume as the snowman (yes, it allows him to "glide" across the stage), his performance is off-the-charts perfect!

Every one of the extraordinarily talented men and women on the stage deserves high praise and thunderous applause which they received from the small, but excited audience at the show I attended. Full disclosure, the low turnout was due to the horrible ice storm and after effects of the weather here in North Texas that struck with a vengeance. Even so, the audience was laughing, singing along and involved every moment. A true testament to this cast's professionalism ... they performed to an audience I estimated to be around one hundred patrons with as much vitality and excitement as if every one of the Majestic's 1704 seats were sold out. THAT folks is the true measure of a dedicated performer!

I'll end my review with the most touching line of the story: "A toy is never truly happy until it is loved by a child." - King Moonracer. Yes folks, that should bring a smile, a memory and maybe even a tear to your eye, and if you want to experience that feeling live, get to the Majestic immediately before they sell out this phenomenal production and you miss the chance to see a premiere example of how truly talented artists present professional theatre and interpret the wonderfully iconic story of Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer live, with music, for ALL AGES!

Richard S. Blake

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