

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, NY

Showstoppers. Directed by John Saunders. Choreographed by Holly Lauren Dayton.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“To hear the rhythm of life. . .”

Once a year the corps, or core of the company, are brought out to perform the kind of songs that make the musicals at the Mac-Haydn shine. None of the “stars” participate though enough of these fine performers have played standout solo roles in one show or another during the season. But here each one of them gets a perfect moment alone on stage and well lit by Kevin Gleason to show what they can do, and how to stop the show cold.

All told there are twenty-two musical numbers in this revue, some familiar and some unusual. Director John Saunders and choreographer Holly Lauren Dayton opened the program with a chorus number of great complexity, and by coincidence one of my all-time favorites, **“The Rhythm of Life”** from *Sweet Charity*, a song not heard often enough. It did, indeed, stop the show cold garnering as much applause as it deserved, for the company chorus sang it like an anthem for this theater’s works of arts.



Tezz Yancey; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

It was followed by **“What Do I Need With Love?”** from *Thoroughly Modern Millie* sung handsomely by Cody Edwards and **“If I Were a Bell”**, a comedy-ballad from *Guys and Dolls* adorably performed by Lucy Rhoades. After much well-deserved cheers from the audience, Trevor Squiers sang **“Forest for the Trees”** from *The Spitfire Grill*, a 2001 off-Broadway musical. He moved us with its sentiments.

Emily Allen kept things beautiful with **“Love Will Come and Find Me”** from 2014’s *Bandstand* followed by **“I Stole a Bus”** from 2008’s *Bubble Boy*, joyously, almost triumphantly, sung by Ricky Dobbs. These are not very familiar songs, but the audience delighted in them. Dean Marino then gave us **“Who I’d Be”** from *Shrek, the Musical*, backed by Anthony Velez and Anna Langlois, both of whom sang their own solos later in the show.



Amber Mawande-Spytek;
Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Anthony Velez; Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Julia Hajjar; Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Patrick MacLennan; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Julia Hajjar sweetly offered Irving Berlin's "**Love, You Didn't Do Right by Me**" from *White Christmas*. Then Miles Yokom touched us even more with "**Til I Hear You Sing**" from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Love Never Dies*, the *Phantom...* sequel. Choreographer Holly Lauren Dayton then led a group of dancers through showstopping medley of Bob Fosse show songs.

"**Cute**" a very special piece of material, was delivered by Tezz Yancey whose tap-dancing rightly produced an enormous round of applause. I thought it was unbeatable but Anthony Velez followed it with "**Everybody's Got a Home But Me**" from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Pipe Dream*. Anna Langlois followed this with the lyrical "**I Am Yours**" - a song I do not know. "**You'll Be Back**" sang Patrick MacLennan in a most amusing manner, from the Broadway hit, *Hamilton*. This was followed by "**Cooties**" from 2002's *Hairspray* sung by Ashley DeLane Burger and a small chorus, a very intriguing combination of songs that really got the audience excited.

"**Shiksa Goddess,**" from Jason Robert Brown's *The Last Five Years*, gave John Hannigan an opportunity to amuse us all. *Wicked*'s "**The Wizard and I**" was well sung by Bella DePaola, followed by Andrew Burton Kelley singing "**Barrett's Song,**" a heartfelt tribute to a ship from *Titanic, the Musical*.

Amber Mawande-Spytek stepped out to sing Stephen Sondheim's "**Another Hundred People**" from *Company*, which she did very, very well, followed by Nina Laing's equally energized performance of "**I Got Love**" from *Purlie*. New Mac-Haydn star Kylan Ross offered a robustly perfect "**On the Streets of Dublin**" from *A Man of No Importance*. The show closed with a full ensemble rendition of **Seasons of Love** from 1996's *Rent*.

On every level a very good, very exhausting show!

Showstoppers repeats on September 14, 21 & 28, at the Mac-Haydn Theater, 1025 NY Route 203 in Chatham, NY. For information and tickets go to their website at www.machaydntheatre.org.

