

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, New York

Xanadu, Book by Douglas Carter Beane. Music and Lyrics by Jeff Lynne and John Farrar.
Directed by Robin Campbell. Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

'Dude. We all speak in unison.'

The Mac-Haydn Theatre is presenting its "Summer in September" series of five shows playing in repertory. Just opened is the musical, "Xanadu" based on an unsuccessful movie created to showcase the talents of Olivia Newton John. It flopped, but it gave birth to the silliest musical to ever grace the live performane stage. This current production is even sillier than most, but it is providing endless fun for its audiences, young and old.



Clio (Lucy Rhoades, c.) and her sisters; Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Julie Galorenzo ad Melpomone, Rachel Pantazis as Calliope; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

The nine muses of ancient Greece decide to inspire a suicidal artist named Sonny (Andrew Burton Kelley) and to do so, they send Clio (Lucy Rhoades) Muse of History, to earth to take care of the matter. She dons leg-warmers, roller skates and a horrible Australian accent to do the job right. Making her task more difficult are two of her sisters, Melpomene (Julie Galorenzo) Muse of Tragedy and Calliope (Rachel Pantazis) Muse of Epic Poetry. They are the bad-guys in this show and they do whatever it

takes to make sure that Clio is unable to fulfill her trials and that she is ultimately punished by Zeus and removed from the collection of Muse sisters.

Sonny is “inspired” after his suicide attempt to convert an abandoned theater building owned by Danny Maguire (Tezz Yancey) into an artistic roller disco. That is the entire plot of this musical. If you think this seems to be out of touch with today’s reality, think again. It is devastatingly funny and touching at the same time as modern “man” comes face to face with ancient wisdom.



Andrew Burton Kelley as Sonny;
Photo: Ann Kielbasa

The company does wonderful work on stage and off. The costumes designed by Angela Carstensen are often as silly as the story. Lighting by Andrew Gmoser highlights each of the moments perfectly. Kevin Gleason’s sets capture the hilarity of the situation. The company of nine players, some of them doubling their roles, are excellent. Rhoades’ Australian accent would make Olivia Newton John blush with shame but her singing and dancing would lighten the star’s mood. Kelley is a lovely foil for the nonsense surrounding his character and Galorenzo and Pantazis are such delicious villains they should always be given the chance to play the bad guys. Yancey entertains as always. Two of the muses (all sisters, remember) are hysterically played by Ricky Dobbs (Thalia, Muse of Comedy) and Patrick MacLennan (Terpsicore, Muse of Dance).

I heard someone in the audience, cheering at the curtain call, say “this is the gayest show I’ve ever seen” and I would almost have to agree. On so many levels this is a show that tickles the sensibilities, both in sexual orientation and in humor. It attacks stereotypes and leaves you nearly breathless about half the time. A wonderful choice to cover the difficulties of the transition from Summer to Autumn, I suggest that you get your tickets now, get to Chatham and indulge your entertainment needs with “Xanadu” while you can. It doesn’t play every night, but seeing Robin Campbell’s humorous take on modern-day’s man in relationship to the eternal values of the world is worth the effort.



Tezz Yancey as Maguire, Lucy Rhoades as Kira; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

+ 09/10/2022 +

Xanadu plays at the Mac-Haydn Theatre, 1925 NY Rte. 203, Chatham, NY through October 2. For information and tickets call 518-392-9292 or go to

www.machaydntheatre.org

