

Proctors, Schenectady, NY

Tootsie, the Comedy Musical, National Tour.

Music and lyrics by David Yazbek. Book by Robert Horn. Directed by Dave Solomon.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Because better is better.”

A really good movie has been turned into a second-rate musical about the production of a third-rate musical which, considering its musical authorship, is a real shame. As a social comedy it makes statements that are genuine and true, and very funny, but that just isn't enough. This National Tour production shows us the play's flaw as often as it does give us a hearty chuckle. Michael Dorsey, the show's *hero*, is not a comfortable or compatible human being. He is an actor, a man who cannot take direction or accept criticism. How he parlays that attitude into a successful engagement is the show's premise and while it felt great in the 1982 Dustin Hoffman movie, it turns into a solid negative in this musical edition.



Tootsie, the Musical; with Drew Becker (in red dress) Photo: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade

Unable to get work as an actor, Dorsey disguises himself as a middle-aged woman named Dorothy Michaels, in order to audition for a new musical about Juliet's nurse. He gets the title role and proceeds in his Michael way to alter and rewrite the show to his character's satisfaction. That's the story. The songs, by one of my favorite composers David Yazbek (The Band's Visit; Dirty Rotten Scoundrels; The Full Monty), don't do much to illuminate the characters or the events of the show. This is definitely not his best work and if you don't believe me, just listen to the entr-acte of the second act: not a melody to be found.

To be fair, the company on stage do fine work with their roles. Drew Becker in the title role(s) works hard, is disarming and sings very well in both guises. Ashley Alexandra as his new-found love does the same with a sweetly lyrical voice. Payton Reilly as Michael's former girl-friend, sings fast-paced patter songs with unusual clarity. Jared David Michael Grant brings



Lukas James Miller (not in this tour) as Max Van Horn and Ashley Alexandra as Julie Nichols;
Photo: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

much needed humor into his role as Michael's roommate and best friend. As Max Van Horn, Matthew Rella personifies that unique combination of arrogance and ignorance that provides much of the verbal comedy in this show.

It is the show itself that lacks the qualities of a hit. For the show within the show, "Juliet's Curse" (later "Juliet's Nurse") costume designer William Ivey Long whose design work I would normally

swear by, has created the most mundane outfits that seem to have nothing to do with the story or time period of that show. The lighting design by Don Holder does things no show's lighting should ever do, neither illuminating or underscoring the book and lyrics. The sets by Christine Peters cause the actors to do more work than should be necessary.

All in all, "Tootsie, the Conedy Musical" is not a show I would very enthusiastically recommend you see. It just isn't good enough to spend the money for, or the time with. The name recognition and the more modern look at the story and motivation don't do enough and though the cast is



Drew Becker as Michael Dorsey and Jared David Michael Grant as Jeff Slater; Photo: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade

good, they are not good enough to justify the experience.

+ 04/12/2023 +

Tootsie plays at Proctors, 432 State Street, Schenectady, New York through April 16. For information and tickets call 518-346-6204 or info@proctors.org.