

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, NY

*42<sup>nd</sup> Street*, Music by Harry Warren, Lyrics by Al Dubin,

Book by Michael Stewart & Mark Bramble, Based on the Novel by Bradford Ropes and the Warner Brothers movie version.

Original Direction and Choreography by Gower Champion;

Originally produced by David Merrick.

Directed by John Saunders; Choreographed by Mandy Modic.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

***“Hear the beat of dancing feet. . .”***

There is something magical about lots of people tap dancing with abandon, expanding the music with their feet, creating an orchestration of clicks and clacks that speak volumes without words. The season opener at the Mac-Haydn Theatre in Chatham, New York is dominated with that extraordinary effect and they have the dancers who can do it, make it solid and exciting, and keep it that way for almost three hours. “42<sup>nd</sup> Street” was Gower Champion’s last gift to America, to entertainment. His legacy, the memories he created in this show, is a hard one to beat but here, in our region, a choreographer named Mandy Modic has actually outdone the master. With her talented company under John Saunders superb direction, Modic has created the most vital, vibrant and enthralling show of this type I’ve seen in years. She is helped by Rachel Revellese who plays chorine Peggy Sawyer who can dance faster than anyone since Eleanor Powell or Ann Miller. “*You’re going out there a youngster, Sawyer, but you’ve got to come back a star*” director Julian Marsh (Gabe Belyeu) says to her and by God, she does!



The company in 42<sup>nd</sup> Street; Photo: Ann Kielbasa



Madison Stratton; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

If you remember the movie you know the plot. For those who don't it's simple: Peggy Sawyer wants to work on Broadway in the early 1930s and she does. That's it in a nutshell. It's the details of that simple story, the characters really, that make it a delicious excursion into career-longing. Dorothy Brock (played exquisitely by Madison Stratton) is set to star in the show financed by her lover Abner Dillon (nicely played by Brian Wagner). Her actual boyfriend Pat Denning (played sweetly by Arthur Beutel) has his life threatened by gangsters and innocent Peggy accidentally causes Brock to break her ankle, closing the show. Through weird circumstances Peggy is offered Brock's starring role and she saves the show. This story is so well-known that I don't consider this a spoiler. It's the details that matter here, not the generality. And it's the

songs that carry the story along the way. Every one is a classic.

Most of the characters are "types" and they are played with honesty and gusto. Bella DePaola give Anytime Annie strength and beauty while Jonah Hale's Billy Lawlor presents ego without masking sincerity (he's a tenor). Taylor Sheppard is a perfect Phyllis. Andy and Mac (played by Trevor Squiers and Jerome Byrne) play their roles with genuineness grounding this musical fantasy in its own reality. The comics, Maggie and Ben (played by Kristen Clark Bielefeldt and Jake Koch) are excellent.

The show's designers have given Saunders the perfect show he deserves. The wonderful scenic design by Erin Kiernan is gorgeously lit by Andrew Gmoser whose colors illuminate and elaborate the brilliant costumes designed by Bethany Marx. Saunders and Modic move their large cast of fifteen players through and around what fills the stage with so much period style that it is as though the audience has been transported back in time. Hair and makeup supervised by Emily Allen and perfect sound design by Sean McGinley complete the picture. Saunders has assembled the best team ever at this theatre. This show is truly worth your time and money, folks.



Jonah Hale, Rachel Revenllese;  
Photo: Ann Kielbasa

+ 06/23/2023 +

**42nd Street** plays at the Mac-Haydn Theatre, 1925 Route 203, Chatham, NY through July 2. For information and tickets call 518-392-9292 or go to [machaydntheatre.org](http://machaydntheatre.org).