

Majestic Theater, West Springfield, MA

*Bright Star*, written and composed by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell.

Directed by Sue Dziura.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

**“We’re the Hicks in this Ville.”**

Steve Martin and Edie Brickell created a musical in which there are few actual surprises. They filled it with a southern, bluegrass score that charms and pleases though it provides very few musical moments that are memorable. The characters are stereotypical and the situation is biblical. Surprisingly the show is extremely entertaining, especially with the fine cast on stage at the Majestic Theater in West Springfield, Massachusetts. They make the experience very worthwhile. Sue Dziura has directed her company of players to be honest and real and in doing so she has given us a show that feels almost like a real moment in our time.



Steven Sands, Megan Mistretta, Michael Devito; Photo: Kait Rankins

Considering the story takes place in 1945, just after World War II, with flashbacks to 1924, that sense of “now” is most amazing. We are drawn into the story of Alice Murphy and Billy Cane without difficulty and without a sense of history. It is just a story of people involved in their work and their lives and we can easily connect with them and their difficulties. It’s a bit of a triumph for everyone involved.

Alice is played with aplomb by Chelsea Nectow who manages the sixteen year old version of herself brilliantly. As the older, editor of Asheville Southern Journal she is equally

impressive. Her singing is the equal of her acting and in songs like “Way Back in the Day,” and “I Had a Vision” she is perfection. The finale of Act One, in which the biblical story of Moses is reflected on, she was essentially moving and emotionally real.

Her two assistants at the Journal are played by Steven Sands and Megan Mistretta who serve as comic relief throughout the show. Both present marvelously realistic characters, odd though they may be. Alice’s true love, Jimmy Ray, is played by Michael Graham Morales and he, too, is softly effective in his role, believable and honest.

Billy Cane, the hero of our story here, is played by Michael Devito, an actor who takes softness to a new level and makes it work with a sense of reality that is somewhat awesome. His performance makes us want to hold him close, to comfort him in his many disappointments and to cheer him for his small realizations of his dreams. His friend, Margo, who finally takes on a stronger role in his life, is played with exuberance and joy by Emery Henderson, a nice difference to the other 2 women who factor into the story.



Chelsea Nectow, Michael Graham Morales;  
Photo: Kait Rankins



The cast of Bright Star; Photo: Kait Rankins

The show is a busy one, nicely designed by Josiah Durham (sets), Daniel D. Rist (lights) and Dawn McKay (costumes). Other principal roles are well played by Gene Choquette, Ramsey Kurdi, Robert H. Clark III, and Christine Voytko. All in all, this slight show is effective and well worth your time and money even if you do see the twists coming at you.

+ 09/09/2023 +

**Bright Star** plays at the Majestic Theater, 131 Elm Street, West Springfield, MA through October 15. For information and tickets go to [majestictheater.com](http://majestictheater.com) or call 312-747-7797.