

Proctors, Schenectady, NY

SIX, written by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss. Directed by Lucy Moss and Jamie Armitage.
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Divorced.” “Beheaded.” “Died.” “Divorced.” “Beheaded.” “Survived!”

The six wives of Henry the Eighth were as different as they could be. Each had a distinct history, personality, relationship with their husband. Each one ultimately had a different final bow. What this musical does to them is turn them into the same woman time and again. They sing in unison, dance in unison, live in unison. They aren't Queens they are icons, rock icons who perform tirelessly and dynamically, in a way that might have gotten them all beheaded if this representation of them had been their true natures. As history shows they were not this much alike. That said, let's take a closer look at SIX The Musical.



The Six Wived of Henry VIII; Photo: Joan Marcus

This is a big budget show with only six performers on stage. Kristina Leopold plays Catherine of Aragon; Cassie Silva plays Anne Boleyn; Kelly Denice Taylor plays Jane Seymour; Danielle Mendoza plays Anne of Cleves; Alizl Cruz plays Katherine Howard; Adriana Scalice plays Catherine Parr; six women as six women. The only other people on stage are musicians: Kami Lujan on drums, Rose Laguana on guitar, Sterlyn Termine on bass, Jame Cardona on keyboards and conducting. A cast of ten, and all women, is unusual for a Broadway musical. Each and every one of these women does extraordinary work in this show. The largeness of Proctors Theater in Schenectady was filled with sound for ninety minutes.

These six women are dead, have been dead for centuries. They weren't friends and this semi-reunion affords them a chance to challenge each other's supremacy in history, egged on by the cheers, applause and instantaneous egging on by the Proctors' audience. While there is no real winner in this competition I found myself quietly rooting for Anne of Cleves whose song "Get Down" ultimately summed up the theme of all of the wives: "I'm the Queen of the castle. Get down you dirty rascal." (Near Rhyme) It's a long number. They're all long numbers, all nine of them. Just nine songs to fill a ninety minute show with only about two minutes of dialogue. These songs are filled with near-rhymes, contemporary jargon and pounding music that rarely varies. Only Catherine Parr gets a ballad "I Don't Need Your Love," sung in a solo, downstage left. Scalice sang it beautifully and it was a most welcome change before the pounding beat returned once again for the multiple finales.

I am an old-school musical theater guy. I like a show with a dramatic line with songs to illuminate the characters and the plot. This show isn't one of those. Now, understand, I did enjoy this show. It was different on every level but it was so powerfully performed in the choreography of Carrie-Anne Ingrouille and the very choreographic direction of co-author Lucy Moss and Jane Armitage that no one could avoid the enjoyment engendered by this show. It is a high-energy drive in an open car through the nighttime British countryside. It is fresh air rushing through your hair. It is a dynamo.

Along the way we don't learn much about these women, their histories, their relationships with Henry or anyone else. With lyrics that are hard to hear we never understand the two decapitations in the story (Boleyn and Howard). We admire the vigor and strength of the six women on stage but we really can't go much further in our appreciation because all we see and hear is their wildly enthusiastic performance of this second-rate material. It's really too bad because it is obvious they are women of talent.

The lighting by Tim Deling is rock concert spectacular. The sparse costumes are out of the wild imagination of Gabriella Slade. The functional set was designed by Emma Bailey. The Sound Design by Paul Gatehouse includes hand-held microphones, looking like regal scepters. I admire all of the fine work done by the creators of this spectacle, but it is still slim theater that entertains us but never enthralls us - an audience pleaser but only a theatrical teaser (actual rhyme).

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Six The Musical plays at Proctors, 432 State Street, Schenectady, New York through May 12. For tickets and information go to Proctors.org or call (518) 346-6204.