

Proctors Theatre, Schenectady, NY
Beetlejuice, the Musical, Book by Scott Brown & Anthony King
Lyrics & Music by Eddie Perfect
Directed by Alex Timbers
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Shake, shake, shake. . .”

Beetlejuice was a funny and irreverent movie with Michael Keaton. The musical is even funnier and much more bizarre. The “F” word abounds but is never offensive - imagine that. The story of a demonic ghost wanting more control of life (his own and everyone else’s) is both absurd and devilishly amusing. This excellent touring production brings every element that the Broadway original exhibited. The two Harry Belafonte songs that end the two acts are so very out of place that we glory in how relevant they seem when they happen. The show is just like that.



Isabella Esler; Photo: Matthew Murphy

Luckily the actor playing Beetlejuice handles the irreverence beautifully. Justin Collette acts his role with as much demonic glory and abandon as his character requires. He uses his voice, hands, body in ways we don’t see often on the Broadway stage. How he can manage to do this role eight times a week amounts to the miraculous. As his initial targets Barbara and Adam (Megan McGinnis and Will Burton) deliver equally grand performances and Isabella Esler as Beetlejuice’s love interest, Lydia, is spectacular.

Can a ghost have sex? This one certainly can, and would. Does a demon possess honesty and use it to his advantage? This one does. What is amazing here is how realistic this fantasy becomes in the able hands of this cast. The new homeowners, Charles and Delia (Jesse Sharp and Sarah Litzinger) give our demon-hero his finest opportunity to achieve his devilish goals and like the newly dead couple they play with amazing strength and agility. In fact, the entire company deliver this energy-consuming musical at the top of their game.



Justin Collett and the chorus; Photo: Matthew Murphy

Alex Timbers had directed his company to play it all at the top of their game and they all deliver for him. The production glows with sets by David Korins, costumes by William Ivey Long and incredible lighting by Kenneth Posner. I don't know for sure but I think Harry Belafonte would be amused.

To tell you more about the show would be to spoil the multiple shocks and surprises that await you. Is this a kid's show? No, but they will enjoy it. The packed house on opening night was unlike any theatre audience I have seen in years. More people than there are in heaven. . .or hell, for that matter never stopped cheering, applauding and laughing. It's a show to see!

+ 06/18/2024 +

Beetlejuice, the musical plays at Proctors Theatre in Schenectady, New York through June 23. For information and ticket go to www.atproctors.org.

