

Proctors, Schenectady, NY

MJ, the Musical, Book by Lynn Nottage. Directed by Christopher Wheldon.

Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman

“Just call my name and I’ll be there.”

Michael Jackson is a true icon. He was from childhood on through today. This show celebrates that reality in the best way possible - through his music and his physical presentation of that music/ The National Tour, now playing at Proctors in Schenectady, stars Jamaal Fields-Green. He matches the soft voice of the star and the physical presentation brilliantly, but he is not the singer Jackson was in his day - at least not in the poor quality sound at this theater which keeps him out of balance with the musicians.



Jamaal Fields-Green as MJ; Photo: Matthew Murphy

Two other young actors play the child and teenage MJ: Erik Hamilton, Josiah Benson. They are terrific. Lynn Nottage’s book for the show uses the development of a Jackson tour in 1992 with a film crew creating a documentary about the star as a format for showcasing classic MJ song and dance numbers. It allows for flashbacks to the Jackson Five days and the interim years. At one point, early in the show, Jackson says he only wants to talk about the music and not his personal life and the show is true to that concept. His mistreatment by his father is part of what we see, but it is not as prominent as it might be.

The actors in this show seem to be fine, but it is hard to identify any of them as their characters, mostly due to the uneven sound quality at the theater. What shines through, however, is the extraordinary dance talents of the company of 22 dancing bodies. They seem to never stop moving from the pre-show, on-stage warmups to the post curtain call dance steps. The show's choreography replicates the Jackson originals but seems to go further to tell us that the talents surrounding him were always in motion. It is MJ's need for perfection that keeps him motivated and when we see familiar showstoppers they seem even more incredible in this show.

The talent runs high here. It is what the show is about and what it is for. It is a very worthwhile experience even if you don't like Michael Jackson. Watching this company is both entertaining and informative as we learn how Jackson and his image developed over the years.

I suggest you see it while you can. It is unforgettable.

+ 12/05/2024 +

MJ plays at Proctors, 432 State Street, Schenectady, NY through December 8. For information and tickets go to info@proctors.org.



Figure 2