

AISLE SAY San Francisco

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'

Music by Thomas "Fats" Waller & others

Lyrics by various writers

Based on an idea by Murray Horwitz & Richard Maltby Jr.

Presented by San Jose Repertory Theatre with Arizona Theatre Company & The Cleveland Play House

Directed by Kent Gash

At San Jose Repertory Theatre

101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA / (408) 367-7255

Reviewed by [Judy Richter](#)

Thomas "Fats" Waller was a pianist and songwriter whose music helped to spark the acclaimed Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s. "**Ain't Misbehavin'**," a musical revue conceived by **Murray Horwitz** and **Richard Maltby Jr.**, pays tribute to that music in a show presented by **San Jose Repertory Theatre**. Co-produced with the **Arizona Theatre Company** and **The Cleveland Play House**, the show features five talented singers -- three women and two men -- who deliver the songs of Waller and others with great energy and often with overt suggestiveness that can grow stale after a while.

Besides the title song, which opens the show, the singers -- **Rebecca Covington, Angela Grovey, Christopher L. Morgan, Ken Robinson** and **Aurelia Williams** -- perform such songs as "**Honeysuckle Rose**," "**Mean to Me**" "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and "**It's a Sin to Tell a Lie**"

There's no story line per se, but the songs give a good overview of Waller's talents. The singers are accompanied by an excellent orchestra led by musical director/keyboardist **Darryl G. Ivey**. Musical staging and choreography are by **Byron Easley**, with sets by **Emily Beck**, costumes by **Austin K. Sanderson**, lighting by **William H. Grant III** and sound by **Brian Jerome Peterson**.

Director **Kent Gash** generally keeps the action moving smoothly, but "**The Viper's Drag**," performed by the bare-chested, very buff Morgan, goes on too long, its salaciousness becoming tiresome. To be fair, though, the opening night audience, especially some of the younger women, seemed to enjoy this number. In fact, most of the audience seemed to become more and more caught up in the spirit of the show.