

The Broadway Critic

Theatre Review: “Ain’t Misbehavin’” @ San Jose Rep, 03/21/10



Photo: Tim Fuller

It's no wonder why *Ain't Misbehavin'* won the *Tony Award* for Best Musical in 1978. You can't help yourself from having a fantastic time at *Ain't Misbehavin'* when Fats Wallers' music makes you want to get up and dance! It sparkles; it shines and most of all, it's deliciously snazzy.

These five performers – Rebecca F. Covington, Angela Grovey, Christopher L. Morgan, Ken Robinson and Aurelia Williams – are Broadway-caliber talent. From the first note of the production in the titled track you are instantly taken by to the sounds of the Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom of the '20's and '30's. Even without a story-based plot, the performers were able to find a story-line in each one of the songs they sang. Because of this, each song became its own “show” – little tidbits and stories of a bygone era.

There were several favorites of the evening but of course, there were a few stand-outs! “Honeysuckle Rose” – one of the more famous songs from this show – was Ken Robinson's shining moment, especially when he hit that famous note at the end of the song and held it for longer than naturally possible. Outstanding! The Act 1 finale, “This Joint is Jumpin'” literally almost had me out of my seat, clapping and dancing! It was electric. “The Viper's Drag/The Reefer Song” was a highlight for the audience as Morgan descended from a rope, shirtless singing a song with a little bit of a raunchy, sexy flavor. As he used the audience to fulfill his passing whims, it got a little more outrageous with each audience member. He nailed it.

Covington's infectious smile lit up the stage whenever she was on. My favorite song of hers was, “Keepin' Out of Mischief Now.” She could sing to me any day of the week! Williams' gorgeous soprano voice and Grovey's sultry pipes were featured in the hilarious “Find Out What They Like”. I couldn't believe the perfect blend and diction behind it all. It was precise in all the right ways. Finally, “Black and Blue” featured the entire cast, sitting on their chairs, singing in perfect harmony. Stunning.

I will say that I wish this was presented in a more relaxed, cabaret-styled, environment that would allow audience members to dance, groove and sing a long. The performers made me feel a part of the Cotton Club, so I actually wanted to be *in* a club.

I think the entire audience was ready to dance and clap at the end because all of us leapt to our feet during the closing song!

I couldn't be more thrilled that this was my first introduction to *Ain't Misbehavin'*! It's a perfect treat!