



Ain't Misbehavin' brings the audience to their feet in San Jose!

[Monday, March 29, 2010](#)

San Jose Repertory Company (SJRC) has just delivered a terrific tribute to Jazz musician and entertainer "Fats" Waller with their production of **Ain't Misbehavin'** this past week. While many of you will immediately recognize this well known entertainer, many, I am sure are not aware of his contributions to Black musical history, and more specifically how a little community called "Harlem", became such an important and renowned center for Black musicians to develop and bring their musical genius into the mainstream of American music. A little history lesson leading up to my review of Ain't Misbehavin' might now be in order.

When the Dutch settled in North America, in the mid-1600's, they built their first settlement on a long narrow island they called "New Neatherlands". The capital city, New Amsterdam, was protected from potential attack by a barricaded wall. The north end of the island was flat, lush and perfect for farming. That farming area was best reached by an Indian trail that ran north to south and was named "New Haarlem" for a city in Holland and this farming area was soon established as a farming village providing sustenance for the settlers in this new world.

Long after the Dutch occupation began, the village of Harlem kept its name. The north-south trail became known as Broadway, the route alongside the barricade became known as Wall Street and New Amsterdam became known eventually as New York City. Harlem evolved into an ideal location for the estates of the wealthy upper class and with transportation improvements exploding in the 19th century, well-to-do New Yorkers sought apartments in Harlem, to escape the influx of immigrants in the downtown area, that is, until the bottom fell out of the real estate market. Property owners now desperate to rent their property, provided rental respite for the thousands of black Americans moving away from the bias of the south. Between 1911 and 1930, Harlem became a social and cultural bedrock for the African-American community in New York and with that explosion, came the literary and musical stage for an enduring socio-political rebirth of the modern African-American in society.

One of the new and celebrated musical icons of this age was "Fats" Waller, a rather large, fun-filled, extremely talented entertainer, a song stylist, pianist and composer. New to this period of time was a form of Jazz that became associated with "Stride" piano dynamics, a new form of syncopation, tone, tension and release and a takeoff from ragtime. "Stride is so-called because while the right hand plays a melody or "riff" on a melody, the left hand "strides" or alternates, sometimes between low octaves (or tenths, for those players who could play them) and chords toward middle "C" of the keyboard." It is a musical language unique to certain accomplished musicians (with a certain kind of personality and swing-style), with whom it became associated. "Fats" Waller was considered to be one of a handful of musicians who was able to master this titillating style of piano playing.

Certainly at this time, the 1920s through the 1930's, Mr. Waller became one of the most recognized black musicians of this period. In 1934 he formed his own band with the help of George Gershwin and William Paley (the founder of the Columbia Broadcasting System). Waller was one of the few musicians of this time period whose compositions and syncopation made the transition from Harlem theatrical and nightclub venues, such as The Cotton Club and the Savoy Ballroom, to the great white way, also known as "Broadway", by way of musical reviews. Shows such as "Connie's Hot Chocolates" and the celebrated "Ain't Misbehavin' review", provided outlets for this kind of Jazz. The music of Waller would in time inspire a specific musical by the same name, created as a tribute to "Fats" Waller, who was considered by many as one of the most revered Jazz artists of his time. Ain't Misbehavin' the Musical, was based on an idea by Murray Horwitz and Richard Maltby, Jr. as a tribute to Waller's signature musical style.

This terrifically entertaining show, "Ain't Misbehavin', The Fats Waller Musical Show", under the direction of Kent Gash and Darryl G. Ivey, brings back the upbeat, vibrant, humorous and articulated sound of Thomas "Fats" Waller in song, some of which I am sure you will remember, just from their names. Songs such as "T Ain't Nobody's Biz-ness If I Do", "Squeeze Me", "Ain't Misbehavin' ", "Honesuckle Rose", "The Joint Is Jumpin'", "Cash For Your Trash" and of course, the memorable "Jitterbug Waltz".

Add to this resonate and vibrant music, the outstanding musical singing and acting talents of Rebecca Covington, Angela Grove, Christopher L. Morgan, Ken Robinson and Aurelia Williams and you have a delightful, fun-filled, upbeat and

vivacious show guaranteed to deliver the “da-sound and da-music, da-sooner, da-better!” Wow, these artists put on one spectacular show, building to an excitement and momentum that just about brings the house down!

While each one of these talented actors are uniquely talented in their own right, certain numbers seemed as though they were written with these artists in mind. Christopher Morgan, owns “The Viper’s Drag” with his sexy song styling and “hunk” of a body. Aurelia is an absolute delight when she sings the outrageously funny song, “When the Nylons Bloom Again”. Angela Grovey really “grooves out” on “Get Some Cash for Your Trash” and touches your heart with her rendition of “Mean To Me”. Ken Robinson is delightful with “I’m Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself A Letter”. Rebecca softly swings with her version of “Yacht Club Swing” and the entire group brought the audience to their feet with the powerfully articulated song, “Black and Blue”. Simply “Superb” has got to be the word!

This show is another example of why San Jose Repertory Theatre is rapidly becoming one of the most popular professional theatrical venues in the entire Bay Area. “Ain’t Misbehavin’ The Fats Waller Musical Show” continues Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m., with matinees on Wednesdays (the 24th and 31st) at 11 am (with a post show discussion), Saturdays at 3 p.m and Sundays at 2 p.m. (also with post show discussions), now through April 18th. Ticket prices range between \$35 and \$74 each and can be secured by calling the box office at (408) 367-7255 or by going online to <http://www.sjrep.com/>. The San Jose Repertory Theatre is a beautiful facility, easy to reach and always rewarding. Ticket prices range between \$21 and \$74 each. The San Jose Repertory Company Theatre is located at 101 Paseo de San Antonio, between 2nd and 3rd Streets, one block north of East San Carlos Street. There are some really terrific restaurants within easy walking distance of the theater, and if you check Mapquest maps you can easily find them. Do a “control-click” on the following address with your mouse and it will bring up the theater’s location on a map! Go to: <http://www.mapquest.com/maps> Type in this address (101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113-2603) in the address box and click on the restaurants link that pops up in the middle of the map and it will show you a number of great restaurants nearby.