

"CARRIE: THE MUSICAL" (Stage Review)

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Friday, 10 February 2012 12:29



CARRIE is kind of perfect for musical adaptation. It's a tale—one of high school anguish, alienation, bullying and the onset of womanhood—in which emotion and tension run high on a constant basis. And in the tradition of musicals, in which when it all becomes too much to bear, the proceedings break out into song, Carrie White's telekinetic powers arrive in bursts much the same, headed toward a show-stopping finale of a different sort.

CARRIE is also notorious. The initial run of its musical incarnation closed merely three days after its official opening, setting the many that never got to witness it up for certain disaster.

Currently playing at the [MCC Theatre](#) (121 Christopher St), and presented by the Lucille Lortel Theatre, CARRIE THE MUSICAL is now revised and reworked, and most certainly not a disaster; a bit of a shame as you may walk away with a larger impression if it was.

What's refreshing, first and foremost, is that CARRIE's revival is not one tinged with irony. Regardless of its end product, the entire company is a hardworking one, and looking to earnestly bring this story to life without a hint, wink or nod towards the show's torrid history. Its stars, Molly Ranson and esteemed stage veteran Marin Mazzie are also tremendous in their portrayals of the afflicted teen and her fanatic mother. Sadly, their half of the story is largely ignored in favor of the high school one, which isn't nearly as compelling, nor a showcase of talent.

While Jeanna de Waal, who essays the entitled and cruel instigator Chris Hargensen shines, the rest of her classmates are either relegated to mostly background work and quick snips or—in the case of the other principal high school roles—broad and uninteresting representations of underwritten kids. Case in point, Ben Thompson, who takes the role of Chris' dipshit of a boyfriend, is a grating presence, and not because his disappearance into a

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smarmy bad kid is so convincing (it's not).



Where CARRIE really suffers, however, is its seeming disinterest in finding the real darkness that lies underneath. Stafford Arima's clever, minimalist staging is commendable (projectors are put to plentiful use), but the rest of his direction is entirely on-the-nose and often highlighting the blandness of the production, not the unique, violent and sad story it's attempting to tell. The show's framing device, which sees Sue Snell recount the sequence of events to interrogators is entirely useless, and only serves to hit you over the head with stated sentiments that should be, and often are, readable in the cast's faces.

The choreography is entirely too familiar as well, forcing the actors to go through the motions of what could be strong numbers, especially the famed prom massacre, whose "dance of death" is well-intentioned, but needed to feel enormous, violent, dangerous and well, scary, to work.

There's a long history of subversive, provoking, exciting and socially conscious musicals that exist, and given all that it entails, it's sad to see CARRIE drop the ball on being any of the aforementioned.

