

Entertainment

Strong Vocals Make Falsettos a Success

review by Charles Peer

For its very first production, the new Davis theatre company Artistic Differences has taken on the William Finn and James Lapine musical *Falsettos*. *Falsettos* is an interesting first choice for the fledgling group, which is not self-identified as an LGBT theatre company, but neatly fits into their goal of staging rarely performed contemporary musical theatre works.

And *Falsettos* is not an easy show to perform. Both its music and lyrics are demanding, the staging is difficult, and for a non-LGBT theatre group, its storyline is very definitely gay. But Artistic Differences has assembled a strong cast and artistic team, and for the most part, has mounted a successful project.

Falsettos is actually a combination of three short works by Finn, *In Trousers*, *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland*. Finn's music and lyrics and Finn's and Lapine's book follow the story of Marvin, a 30's something divorced father who wants nothing more than a "tight knit family" that would include his son, his lover, his ex-wife, his psychiatrist - who is his ex-wife's new love interest - and of course, the lesbians from next door. The opening song, "Four Jews in a Room Bitching," gives you a sense of where the play is heading.

Vocally, the production is a hit, but stylistically, it often misses the mark. Both Craig Howard as Marvin and Jerry Lee as his lover Whizzer turn in strong

performances and do wonderfully. Howard is particularly moving in "Father to Son" and Lee's interpretation of "You Gotta Die Sometime" is unique and flawless. And although the pair when singing together are very moving, dramatically you don't feel the connection between them that leads to such moving songs as "Unlikely Lovers." Simply put, there is no chemistry between them.

Margaret Hollinbeck as Marvin's wife, Trina, is a joy to watch and listen to. Her rendition of "Holding to the Ground" is very strong, as is "I'm Breaking Down," although the latter could have used a more comic touch and better staging. Kevin Carvalho, as Mendel, the psychiatrist is fascinating. With

strong vocals and a huge stage presence his performance is nearly show stealing, especially in his more comic songs like "Everyone Hates His Parents."

Joey Harris as Marvin's son, Jason, does his own fair share of scene stealing and is particularly fun in "My Father's a Homo" and moving in "Another Miracle of



Jerry Lee as Whizzer and Craig Howard as Marvin in Falsettos.

Judaism." Although not introduced until the second act, the "lesbians from next door," Kristen Wagner as Dr. Charlotte and Jessica Stein as Cordelia both turn in stalwart performances and are instrumental in turning the show from the



As Marvin's son Jason says, center played by Joey Harris, "You people are so white!"

relationship-based first act into the somber telling of the AIDS epidemic in the second act.

And while I have several qualms with the staging, klunky scene changes and lighting of this production, the second act performances in particular are as moving and touching as any I have ever seen. Overall, this is a good production, and well worth the

drive to Davis.

Falsettos will only have three more performances by the time this review comes out, Friday and Saturday Aug. 4 & 5 at 8 p.m. and Sunday, Aug. 6 at 2 p.m. at the Hoblitt Performing Arts Center, 607 Pena Dr. in Davis. Tickets are \$15 and are available by calling 916-233-5480 or visit their Web site www.ArtisticDifferences.net

MONARCHS BASKETBALL

{ Sunday, July 30

vs. Detroit Shock @ ARCO Arena, 6 p.m.



Tuesday, August 1

vs. Houston Comets @ ARCO Arena, 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 5

vs. Washington Mystics @ ARCO Arena, 7 p.m.

Thursday, August 10

vs. Minnesota Lynx @ ARCO Arena, 7 p.m.



ticketmaster

ticketmaster.com
916-649-TIXS

Tickets starting at just \$10
visit SACRAMENTOMONARCHS.COM

One on One Personal Training
Monthly Memberships Available
Nutrition
Massage Therapy
Clinical Exercise Specialist

Urban Fitness & Wellness Center, Inc.

Julie is now accepting new clients. Call today for free consultation.



Darnell Stephenson
Julie Fray
916-492-2525
2525 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95815