

Review for GYPSY, Theatre Arlington

- February 17, 2023

Gypsy, A Musical Fable

Book by Arthur Laurents | Music By Jule Styne | Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim



Reviewed by Natalie Shaw

I love, love, LOVE Theatre Arlington! Every time I attend a production there, I feel right at home with everyone's hospitality and their performances are always top notch! And *Gypsy* is no exception to their commitment to greatness. There are so many wonderful things to say about Theatre Arlington, it's difficult to know where to start, but allow me to list a few, in no particular order: 1. Fantastic play selections, 2. Extremely talented artists and performers, 3. A modern, chic and friendly environment with plenty of accessibility for every patron, 4. A live band with musical theatre productions, and 5. Every production is devoted to excellence!

Gypsy, A Musical Fable is based on the memoir of "Rose Louise Hovik", aka *Gypsy Rose Lee*. In this script, she is primarily referred to as *Louise*, who is marvelously portrayed by **Presley Duyck**. The musical focuses on the life of *Rose* (played by **Brandy Raper**) and her two daughters, *June* (played by **Tilda Grace**) and *Louise*. *Rose* was abandoned by her own mother as a young girl, and seeks fame, fortune, and validation, first by way of her daughter, *June*, then, later, by way of her daughter, *Louise*. She will stop at nothing to get it– even pushing three different husbands out the door, if they dared to challenge her! It would seem that *Rose* is set on creating a better life for her children than the one she had for herself in sleepy Seattle, but we have to wonder if her daughters are really her main priority. When *June* makes a life altering decision to leave her mother's desires behind and seek her own opportunities, *Rose* quickly shifts her focus to *Louise*, pursuing stardom for her second, less alluring daughter. When their traveling vaudeville show finds itself in a burlesque theater, the budding *Louise* is both intrigued and fearful of her new environment. With finances tight and fortune low, *Rose* abandons her morals and sacrifices





young *Louise's* innocence and integrity, as a means to survive, disregarding the wisdom of *Louise's* talent agent, *Herbie*, (played by Equity actor **Brian Hathaway**,) who is also Rose's fiancé.

I use the term "fiancé" lightly, because truthfully speaking, *Rose* has strung *Herbie* along throughout the course of their time together. It is only in her desperation to survive that *Rose* finally breaks down and agrees to marry *Herbie*. The emotional pain and fear of abandonment have left *Rose* suspicious of any man's true affections for her, and this is evident in **Raper's** skillful depiction of her. **Raper** beautifully embraces *Rose's* passionate temperament and need for validation, while also revealing her wounds and trepidation toward anyone who does genuinely love her.

Rose's decision to manipulate *Louise* in such a selfish way, leads to an explosive scene between *Herbie* and *Rose*. While normally a peace-maker, *Herbie* finally draws the line with *Rose*. **Hathaway's** interpretation of *Herbie* is one of a man with several mixed emotions about his relationship and partnership with his sweetheart. **Hathaway** makes it clear that *Herbie* has grown to really love *Rose* and her daughters, but recognizes the conflict that exists between them when it comes to *Rose's* controlling nature and *Herbie's* tendency to cave-in. **Hathaway** prudently uses charming and soothing tactics to express affection and win over his counter-part, but turns to obstinance and firmness in such a way



that he appears to be slamming her against the wall with his words, when she has finally gone too far. This comes as a surprise to *Rose*, as well as the audience! **Hathaway** effectively transforms his character abruptly and drastically, catching us off guard, but giving *Herbie* the undivided attention that he so desperately deserves.

Theatre Arlington brings us an incredible production of *Gypsy- A Musical Fable* that is beautifully tragic and epically unforgettable! Executive Producer/Director **Steven D. Morris** has selected a compelling cast of sensational performers and set the tone for a striking story with a powerful message about survival and security. It is one that you surely don't want to miss! Ticket information can be found at theatrearlington.org.

Audience Rating: M for Mature audiences only, for strong language, sexuality and mature content

Accessible Seating: Available

Hearing Devices: Available

Sensory Friendly Showing: Not available

Noises and Sounds to Prepare For: Strobe lights used

Y'all Enjoy!

Natalie Shaw