

# Onstage NTX

## Gypsy – A Musical Fable @ Theatre Arlington



*Photos by Jacob Oderberg*

—Jan Farrington

Happy 50th anniversary, Theatre Arlington!

The second-oldest continuously running theater in Tarrant County (after Casa Manana, right?) celebrates in high style with a big (and big-hearted) production of the 1959 classic *Gypsy: A Musical Fable*.

Brandy Raper makes a memorable, multi-layered Mama Rose, whose show-biz dreams for daughters June and Louise are just as much about her own lost hopes of being a star—and her determination not to be among the “some hum-drum people” who just sleep through life. She’s red-headed and full of ideas, with a warm smile and a fierce spirit that keeps pushing forward...no matter what. She’s utterly shameless, whether browbeating a theater manager into booking their act, or stuffing diner silverware into her purse. Her rich voice can be velvety in a song like “Small World,” or Broadway-belted in “Everything’s Coming Up Roses” and “Rose’s Turn.” In Brad Hathaway, who plays nicest-guy-ever Herbie (theater agent and Rose’s longtime love), she has a great partner with an equally resonant voice.

To be honest, I wasn’t sure I was in the mood for *Gypsy* on opening night—but then the music started (Vonda K. Bowling and her sassy band are great), and I remembered: Every song is a masterpiece. Jule Styne composed the tunes (it’s his music in *Bells are Ringing*, *Funny Girl*, and so many other musicals and movies), a young Stephen Sondheim wrote the clever, funny,

heart-tugging lyrics, and writer Arthur Laurents gave the show an edge. Taken as a whole, *Gypsy* gives a master class on the mid-century American musical—and why it’s among our national treasures.

But back to the story.

Mama’s hilariously bad vaudeville act never changes, from the time when “Baby” June and Louise (Tenley Heugatter and Nahara Zoe Lopez) and their chorus of “Newsboys” are just kids, to when they’re young adults (now played—with tons of charm and feistiness—by Tilda Grace and Presley Duyck). Nicole Jamie Carrano’s choreography for the “kiddie” act is appropriately cheesy and fun, but she’s versatile, with a lovely slow-dance style for Rose and Herbie in “You’ll Never Get Away From Me,” and a vaudeville bounciness to “Together Wherever We Go.”

It’s a cast of thousands (well, it seems that way), and director Morris doesn’t let anybody “phone in” a role. The Newsboys (kids and adults) are peppy and engaging. In fact, there are lots of enjoyable brief appearances—by Caleb De La Torre as chorus boy Tulsa, who has big dreams for himself and June; by Andrew Nicholas as Mr. Goldstone, a big-time theater booker Rose thinks will save them; by Samantha Padilla as a theater honcho’s skeptical secretary; and of course by Tessie Tura (Mattie Lillian Davis), Miss Mazeppa (Padilla again), and Electra (Aly Badalamenti), three proud burlesque queens who give teenage Louise a how-to on the strip-tease in “You Gotta Get a Gimmick.” (“If you wanna bump it, bump it with a trumpet.”)

You know the line “it’s a classic for a reason?” Pretty sure somebody wrote it about *Gypsy*.

**WHEN:** Through March 5

**WHERE:** Theatre Arlington, 316 W. Main Street, Arlington

**WEB:** [theatrearlington.org](http://theatrearlington.org)