

THE DROWSY CHAPERONE
Steve Allen- KFUE-FM

Stages strikes again with a totally charming, totally flawless production of the Tony Award winning The Drowsy Chaperone. Billed as a play within a musical, it centers on the mischievous, eccentric “Man In Chair” who is obsessed with Broadway musicals and invites us to listen to his favorite, a 1928 extravaganza called “The Drowsy Chaperone.” What ensues is a treat for every musical comedy aficionado and even for those who have only a passing interest in the theatre.

You can't help but be charmed by Stages favorite, David Schmittou as the enigmatic Man In Chair. His wit and charm and bubbling enthusiasm for this 1920's pastiche is infectious. As the classic, fictitious musical unfolds in the man's small apartment, we are treated to David Elder as Robert and Tari Kelly as Janet- the couple who are to be married at Mrs. Tottendale's posh estate. The only problem is that Janet's boss, played with flair by Ed Romanoff, is trying to keep her in his successful Broadway show.

Every classic musical cliché is present as equally clichéd characters pop in and out of the tuneful production. There's the ditzy blonde girlfriend of the producer, played with squeaky enthusiasm by Melinda Cowan, the gangsters posing as pastry chefs featuring Michael Baxter and the always delightful Ben Nordstrom and, of course the Drowsy Chaperone herself, played with just the proper amount of tipsy splendor by Christianne Tisdale. Other Stages favorites shine including Zoe Vonder Haar and Kari Ely along with great work by Brian Ogilvie as the best-best-best man and John Alban Coughlan as the droll butler. And special attention to the beautiful, over-the-top performance by Edward Juvier as the Latin lothario.

Michael Hamilton has staged this glorious musical masterpiece to perfection and the Dana Lewis choreography is spot-on. With music and lyrics by Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison and the delightful book by Bob Martin and Don McKellar, The Drowsy Chaperone is one you cannot miss. It plays at Stages in Kirkwood through August 16th. This is Steve Allen with a look at theatre in St. Louis for Classic 99.

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