



SHOW-STOPPING MOMENT: Deborah Cox is consistently amazing in *Jekyll & Hyde*. Photo: Chris Bennion

Theater Review

Superb Deborah Cox rocks in *Jekyll & Hyde*



JEKYLL & HYDE

Book and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse

Music by Frank Wildhorn

Directed and choreographed by Jeff Calhoun

Marquis Theatre

1535 Broadway at 45th Street

(877-250-2929), www.JekyllandHydeMusical.com

By David NouNou

Jekyll & Hyde is one of those “unique” shows that had a cult following long before it opened on Broadway in 1997. It also has a unique history as well. Not being able to find financing as a show, it was conceived as a recording (concept album), with the songs sung by the incomparable Colm Wilkinson from *Les Miserables* and Linda Eder, Mr. Wildhorn’s then-wife. The recording was a sensation, the songs were being sung by every major artist, and from 1990 to 1998, there wasn’t a year that at least three Miss America contestants sang the major songs “This Is the Moment”, “Someone Like You”, “In His Eyes”, “A New Life,” and many more. The score was a phenomenon and the show finally did open in 1997 at the intimate Plymouth Theatre with the brilliant Robert Couciolli. It ended up running a total of 1,543 performances, and David Hasselhoff closed the show in January of 2001.

Fast forward to 2013, a new revival, still possessing a sublime score, actually Mr. Wildhorn’s most accessible and successful one, handsomely mounted with interesting new touches by Jeff Calhoun but unfortunately and mistakenly dropped into the cavernous barn of a theater, the Marquis. For this is a fragile show and needs intimate surroundings where the audience has to connect with the players. This show is not about sound effects and reverberations; it’s a delicate, melodious and extremely dark, intimate musical with a small cast, and has to be presented in the right venue. No amount of special effects can fill the void on this humongous stage, especially when it is lacking an actor in the central role

of Jekyll/Hyde.

The musical is based on Robert Louis Stevenson's novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, dealing with the dual sides that all people possess the good and the evil. When Dr. Jekyll is denied a patient to test his theory of excising the evil and leaving the good in man, he has to perform the experiment on himself, and hence his evil alter ego Mr. Hyde emerges and does dastardly deeds until he loses control and can't subdue his evil self. To play this demanding dual role, you need a formidable actor who can sing the almost operatic score and mesmerize the audience and have complete control of the stage, and this person is not Constantine Maroulis.

A runner-up on season four of the once glorious "American Idol," Mr. Maroulis and his shtick of rocker "head banging" may have worked in *Rock of Ages* (for which he received a Tony nomination), but it decimates him here. Yes, he can sing, but that is not enough; he has to also be able to *act*. Because every song that Jekyll/Hyde has is a performance unto itself. His rendition of the now-anthem song of the show, "This Is the Moment," borders on the laughable. This is not an audition for "Idol"; this is Broadway. The song must be sung with conviction and not be performed like, to quote an old Foreigner song, "a jukebox hero/with stars in his eyes." Where was director Jeff Calhoun to oversee and sedate Mr. Maroulis and explain what was needed to be done?

Fortunately, the two main ladies of the show keep this revival together. There are two women in Jekyll/Hyde's life. First, we have Emma Carew (Teal Wicks), his virtuous intended bride. Ms. Wicks possesses a lovely voice and sings her songs gallantly. And also Lucy Harris, the prostitute, played by the ever-glorious, Grammy-nominated diva Deborah Cox. Originally a dance-pop singer with multiplatinum recordings, I had the good fortune of seeing her Broadway debut in 2004 as a replacement in *Aida*, the Elton John-Time Rice musical, and she blew me away. I was already a fan of her recordings, but I became an ardent fan after seeing her performance in that show. Thank God she is back on Broadway, for this lady knows how to work an audience and have command of the stage. Her voice is still unique and sublime, and her renditions of "A New Life," "Someone Like You," and her duet with Ms. Wicks, "In His Eyes," are show-stoppers.

It is a shame this show had to be so over-amplified to accommodate the size of the theater, because the score is lilting and haunting and should be enjoyed and appreciated for its intricate simplicity and not be blasted by sound effects. However, there is a delicious treat here, the irreplaceable Deborah Cox. Ms. Cox has a soaring, powerful vocal delivery consistently, and such an amazing stage presence. Her Lucy is outstanding, giving this revival the credibility it needs.

Edited by Scott Harrah

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