





'THREE QUEENS OF THE NORTH': (left to right) Sally Wilfert, Mamie Parris, & Donna Lynne Champlin prepare to scatter their dad's ashes in Glacier Bay, AK, in *See Rock City & Other Destinations*.

Photo: Carol Rosegg

Theater Review

***See Rock City* is musical tour of America & its seekers**

See Rock City & Other Destinations

Music by Brad Alexander

Book & Lyrics by Adam Mathias

Directed by Jack Cummings III

Through August 8, 2010

The Duke

229 West 42nd Street

(646-223-3010), www.Dukeon42.org

By Scott Harrah

See Rock City & Other Destinations is an ambitious but thematically disjointed musical travelogue that takes us from the Deep South to Alaska and different points in between in America, attempting to show that, in many places nationwide, everyone is seeking something. Adam Mathias' book is literally and figuratively all over the place, but there's enough talent here to overshadow *See Rock City's* shortcomings.

The show is unconventional in every sense, from its staging (characters perform on everything from raised platforms to the corner of a railing above the nonexistent set) to the many stories, none of which weave into each other cohesively.

The entire narrative is simply vignettes. The opener features a mysterious traveler (Bruce Ryness) who meets a friendly waitress (Mamie Parris) and yearns to visit See Rock City, a tourist attraction in the South. Although this particular tale, like most in the musical, is awkward and makes little sense, Ryness and Parris have powerful voices that work well with Mathias' lyrics and Brad Alexander's pop-tinged musical arrangements.

Some of the stories are touching, such as one in which a woman (Sally Wilfert) takes her wheelchair-bound grandfather (Ryan Hilliard) to the Alamo for an annual pilgrimage to remember falling in love with his late wife decades earlier. Other tales are less inspired, such as one involving a man (Stanley Bahorek) searching for extraterrestrial life in Roswell, New Mexico.

The best and most powerful scene shows three sisters (Wilfert, Parris, and Donna Lynne Champlin) on a cruise ship in Glacier Bay, Alaska as they prepare to scatter the ashes of their father into the icy water below. Two of the sisters don't get along, but after some typical family squabbling, the women manage to put aside differences as they fondly remember their dad and the many memories they shared, particularly trips to Alaska (where he christened them "Three Queens of the North").

Mathias' book attempts to show that, whether people are at Niagara Falls, exploring Coney Island or somewhere out in the hinterlands, we are all searching for meaning and answers. Director Jack Cummings III gets noteworthy performances from everyone in the cast, and *See Rock City & Other Destinations* primarily appeals to younger audiences that appreciate a show that is unorthodox,

creative, and not afraid to take artistic chances.

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