



FAVA BEANS, CHIANTI, LIVER, & LAUGHS: Brent Barrett (above) as Dr. Hannibal Lecter & Jenn Harris as Clarice Starling in *Silence! The Musical*. Photo: Carol Rosegg



Theater Review

Silence! The Musical:

Classic thriller lambasted for laughs

SILENCE! THE MUSICAL

Book by Hunter Bell

Music & lyrics by Jon Kaplan & Al Kaplan

Directed & choreographed by Christopher Gattelli

Fridays at 8 pm; Saturdays at 8 pm & 10:30 pm

Through August 13, 2011

Theatre 80

80 St. Mark's Place, (212-352-3101)

www.silencethemusical.com

By Scott Harrah

The Silence of the Lambs, the classic thriller starring Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins, has always been ripe for a parody, and this Off-Broadway spoof—in the works for six years—is long overdue, but the wait is finally over. Book writer Hunter Bell, best known for the Tony-nominated *[title of show]*, and music and lyric writers Jon Kaplan and Al Kaplan, have created a marvelously twisted farce that both celebrates and skewers the tale of Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Brent Barrett) and Clarice Starling (Jenn Harris), with mostly hysterical results.

Think *The Book of Mormon* paved the way for a satire this profane? Think again—for *Silence!* debuted back in 2005 at the New York International Fringe Festival, long before Trey Parker and Matt Stone were poking fun at Mormons in *The Book of Mormon*. There's very little about the show we can even publish on StageZine.com, considering *Silence!* has filthy, funny, scatological song titles such as "If I Could Smell Her C****" and "Put the Fu****g Lotion in the Basket," and one of the most hilarious moments involves public masturbation (please, don't ask, but let's just say it is more outrageous than anything in the movie).

What sets *Silence!* apart from being another movie parody is the magical combination of Hunter Bell's quick-witted book, Jon and Al Kaplan's plot-propelling and so-sick-they're-amusing songs, the winning ensemble cast, and Christopher Gattelli's clever direction and choreography.

Two of the show's standouts include Ms. Harris as Clarice. With her big, overdone 1990s hairdo and tweed slacks and jacket, she is a dead ringer for Jodie Foster as she delivers dialogue with gleeful, over-the-top intent and mimics the Oscar-winning actress' hoarse drawl. Brent Barrett has the right combination of creepiness and eloquence, and has a soaring, mellifluous voice that is tailor made for musical-comedy theater.

There are also many great moments with Stephen Bienskie as "Buffalo Bill" and Lucia Spina as his victim, Catherine Martin. Best of all, floppy-eared lambs dance around the stage and help tell the story like a crazed Greek chorus on a bad acid trip. For a lighthearted satire, this show has wonderfully fleshed-out characters, making it enjoyable even for those who never saw the original film, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.

Following its humble Fringe beginnings and a healthy run in London, the latest incarnation of *Silence!* has all the makings of a cult hit that deserves to delight audiences for some time. (Judging from the overwhelming positive audience response this reviewer witnessed at a preview, *Silence!* will most likely be extended, but do *not* wait to get tickets.)

Theatre 80 in the East Village is the perfect venue for a show that is best seen in a small, intimate space, but do not be surprised if it moves to a larger theater in the fall. *Silence! The Musical* is one of the most outrageous, laugh-out-loud Off-Broadway shows of summer 2011.

Published July 8, 2011

Reviewed at press preview performance on July 2, 2011

Copyright © July 8, 2011 StageZine.com