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SING LIKE AN EGYPTIAN (standing left to right): Beth Cheryl Tarnow (Judge), Erika Amato (Cleopatra), Ryan Williams (Soothsayer), Bret Shuford (Marc Antony), Rebecca Riker (Enobarbus), (center) Bruce Sabath (Julius Caesar) in *The Sphinx Winx*. Photo: Peter James Zielinski.

Theater Review

The Sphinx Winx: Satirical spin on Ancient Egypt



THE SPHINX WINX

Written by Philip Capice, Anne Hitchner, Kenneth Hitchner, Jr., & Robert Keuch

Music by Kenneth Hitchner, Jr.

Choreography by Tara Jeanne Vallee

Musical direction by Jeffrey Lodin

Directed by Matthew Hamel

Through July 24, 2011

The Beckett Theatre

410 West 42nd Street

(212-239-6200), www.TheSphinxWinx.com

By Scott Harrah

In *The Sphinx Winx*, a musical-comedy misinterpretation of Ancient Egypt, the story of Cleopatra, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony is skewered for laughs. Anyone expecting an accurate depiction of the Queen of the Nile and her minions might be disappointed, but this ambitious little show definitely delivers the comic goods. It lampoons not only history but everything from Britney Spears to Wikipedia, with a few silly, cartoonish nods to such modern media sensations as Sarah Palin and Nancy Grace.

The show originated in 1952, where it was written and performed by students at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Its script was then reportedly locked in a vault for more than five decades until librettist Bob Keuch found it in 2006 and worked with the original authors to condense the three-hour show into 90 minutes. An Equity Showcase was presented in 2008, followed by two staged readings until its current incarnation as an Off-Broadway musical on Theatre Row.

The Sphinx Winx is primarily a satirical caricature of the classic tale of the kingdom of Egypt in deep debt

to the Roman Empire due to Caesar (Bruce Sabath) and his carefree spending on Cleopatra (Erika Amato). When Marc Antony (Bret Shuford) arrives in Egypt to investigate, things do not exactly go as planned, especially after the court's Soothsayer (Ryan Williams) falsely predicts that Antony will fall for Cleopatra.

The chemistry between Mr. Shuford as Marc Antony, and Rebecca Riker as his true love, Crecia, is especially noteworthy. Their voices harmonize beautifully in such songs as "Must Be Falling in Love" and "One of These Days."

Ms. Amato, as Cleopatra, shows off her impressive vocals, particularly in the song "Queen of Today."

Director Matthew Hamel needs to rein in some of the over-the-top performances here, but in a musical comedy this intentionally giddy, it almost does not matter. The show still has the homespun feel of a showcase, but there is enough genuine talent in the cast to make *The Sphinx Winx* worth a look.

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