



Review: Hairspray the Musical

Description

Remount at the Centaur is a repeat smash

By **Byron Toben**

The Cote St.Luc Dramatic Society remounted its award winning production of the musical Hairspray for an all too brief run of four days at the Centaur. With its huge cast of 32, seven live musicians and 22 songs, further enhanced by lively choreography, it rivals many Broadway shows in production values.

Established only four and a half years ago, this dedicated community theatre group had previously produced such famous shows as Grease and Fiddler On the Roof. Its shows are produced by city councilor (and mayor-in-waiting) Mitchell Brownstein. Director Anisa Cameron brings a professional polish to the largely amateur volunteer cast.

Hairspray, readers may recall, started out as a campy film in 1988 by John Waters featuring the flamboyant Divine. It later was transformed into a Broadway musical in 2002 (which I was offered to invest in for a small unit, but refused because I thought it would flop... nine Tony awards later, boy, was I proven wrong!). This then led to a 2007 film version of the musical with John Travolta in the Divine role.

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Aside from the finger popping sixties tunes, the plot involves the emerging civil rights movement and empathy for blacks as well as tubby teenagers. From the opening number of Good Morning, Baltimore thru Mama, I'm a Big Girl Now and Welcome to the Sixties to the ending You Can't Stop the Beat, lots of audience head bopping.

Not a weak link in the cast, but with so many, we can only highlight here Amber Jonas as the pudgy, big haired Tracy, the teenager with a dream to star in a dance TV weekly, Mike Melino as Edna, her deep throated mother, Megan Magisano as her tall slim blonde rival Amber Von Tussle and Alisha Ruiss as Velma Von Tussle, her mom.

Special plaudits go to Maddanna Calix-Antoine, a dynamite gospel singer as Motormouth Maybelle and her



stage brood of Seaweed (Justin Johnson) and Little Inez (Renée Eloy).

Mitchell Brownstein appears as Tracy's father and Brandon Schwartz as Link, the star of the Corny Collins TV dance show, M.C.'d by Corny (Ryan Kligman).

Hairspray (the product, not the show) manufacturers could not have envisioned that their cosmetic, which outsold lipstick for a while, would become a live and film hit.

Well, Dippity-do™, so goes the world.

Hairspray, the Broadway Musical ends at Centaur Theatre today Sunday, January 24 at 2 pm and 8 pm. Tickets 514 288-3161 or centaurtheatre.com/hairspray.html

Image: Diane Dupuis Kallos

Byron Toben is the immediate past-president of the Montreal Press Club.

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Date Created

January 2016