

THEATRE REVIEW #711 – Princess And The Frog
"TW's Storybook Theatre's "The Princess And The Frog" Is Pure Family Fun For Children Of
All Ages!"

## Written By Lorenzo Marchessi

It's a classic – Brothers Grimm first came up with "The Frog Prince" in a series of short fairy tales back in 1837 and later many adaptations and versions were written and Theatre West's proud offshoot of their company – Storybook Theatre – has created a wonderful fun, funny and musically engaging production called – what else – "The Princess And The Frog". It is smartly written for the kids and cleverly entertaining for the 'kids at hearts' (parents and adults). So modernly written to be so very enjoyable even now, by Lloyd J. Schwartz and Hope Juber with all the hysterical (and lesson to be learned) music and lyrics written by Laurence and Hope Juber - your kids are in for an interactive, audience participatory ride of their life - and the parents are going to have just as much fun watching the kids reactions and the performers reactions to the kids. No two shows are the same. No two kids react or respond the same way and the results is nothing short of family heart-warming fun. You can tell producer Barbara Mallory put a lot of heart and soul into this production as the show is so well put together and coordinated that this is something the whole family will enjoy no matter what the age. What makes this so much fun, tearfully laughing to adults and so exciting for the kids is how director David P. Johnson cast such wonderfully charged, energetic and incredibly sharp performers. He allowed the story and music to be the backdrop of a small group of very witty, fun and musically charged performers and allowed their talents to take center stage. Okay – now with the cast –Kristin Towers-Rowles plays Hyacinth, a very smart – if somewhat lovably scattered fairy with the powers of helping people see what's important. Kristin is a pure delight! Beside her amazing voice singing "Doin' Good" she has really incredible comic chops when she is playing the children and audience overall like playing the accuracy of musical notes with perfection. Her expression and reactions reminded me of watching the classic comedian Carol Burnett on her show and laughing out loud

at the wild antics and clearly unscripted responses she gets from interacting with the kids (and adults) as she tells her story. So much fun. Andrew James Villareal plays the Prince (and the amazing Frog) and boy is he having too much fun as well. Before he becomes green, his song "Looking Good" will just have you in hysterics as his vain attitude and disposition will lead you to understand why Hyacinth does what she does. As the frog becomes not only charming and adorable, but Andrew has an amazing duet with Kristin called "Croaks and Ribbits" where the two just shine and are clearly having fun with it. Katie Kitani plays the Princess, and she, too, has a lesson or two to learn about having an attitude and Katie just knocked it out of the park with her song "I'm Bored" clearly explaining she has everything she could ever want – but still can't find anything to do to keep herself entertained. Enter Kristin again to teach her a lesson as well. Katie and James have an initial love-hate relationship that really turns into an honest and real affection leaving the kids (and adults again) cheering for their happiness. Again Katie is so funny and has a very wonderful and heartfelt singing voice to boot! Anthony Gruppuso is the Princess's father, the King, and in his song "King's Lament" he explains how being a father and trying to keep his daughter happy and safe is not an easy thing to do. Anthony is playing this to the hilt. From his inviting, audience children join his royal lunch – to playing referee to his daughter and the 'new' frog in town – he is nothing short of a comic delight to see. I particularly like the last song "Don't Make Promises You Can't Keep" because it has a wonderful message for the kids and also can remind the adults sometimes following through is a better than not. I left the theatre humming it along with all the kids leaving the building with me. Oh, and the kids (and adults) get to meet the cast after the show. Watching the kids light up to meet the King, a perky Fairy, a revitalized Prince (former frog) and a now happy Princess was such a true delight to see, and it made the parents just as pleased as well. Did I mention there's juice and cookies during intermission? Oh, okay, children's theatre has come a long way these days and it's smart productions like this that keep it topical, fun and musically entertaining for all. Bring yourself. Bring your kids. Your cousins. Nephews. Nieces. Mom and Dad. Bring all your friends and family you are still talking to. I guarantee you'll have a wonderful few hours of fun and laughs with an amazing cast of talented performers. Theatre West's – Storybook Theatre production of "The Princess And The Frog" is a must see. You can book field trips and birthday parties too. I highly recommend this for everyone who needs a good laugh from a classic story. Check them out at Theatrewest dot.com and tell them Lorenzo sent you from FaceBook dot com/TheGeekAuthority! ©2017 TheGeekAuthority dot com & ©2017 LandMProductions dot

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Pic 001 – Top L. – David P. Johnson, TGA's Michael Macaraeg, TGA's Lorenzo Marchessi – Top Mid. – Andrew James Villareal – Top R. – Kristin Towers-Rowles, Lorenzo M. – Mid. L. – Lorenzo, M., Anthony Gruppuso – Mid. Cen. L. - Kristin Towers-Rowles – Mid. Cen. R. – Katie Kitani – Mid. R. -Lorenzo M., Andrew James Villareal – Bot l. - Katie Kitani, Lorenzo M. – Bot R. – Full cast and kids!