

Discover Hollywood's Glowing Review By Jen Brown



Constance Jewell Lopez as Fairy Godmother. Charleene Closshey as Cinderella. Photo credit: Dina Morrone.

[Cinderella - Theatre Review](#)

If you are looking for a wonderful afternoon of fun, laughter and sheer enjoyment - get yourself along to Theatre West, Cahuenga Boulevard West, Hollywood and see Storybook Theatre's latest offering. I did and had a whale of a time. Accompanied by my two granddaughters (Stella and Cynthia) I was witness to a 'Cinderella' of the simplest kind, the kind children love and need. There was nothing too scary, a huge relief for those bringing very tiny tots, just a gigantic helping of warmth, love and sweet wit, more than suitable for children and grown-ups alike.

Our Story Began With...



Charleene Closshey as Cinderella. Photo credit: Dina Morrone.

Our story began with Cinderella making her entrance down through the audience, chatting to the kids as she went. She told them how hard it was to keep the place clean and so convincing was she that when she eventually reached the stage to sing "More to Life" (than cleaning and chores), the young audience, whole heartedly agreed with her and joined in her lament. CHARLEENE CLOSSHEY sings a very pretty song indeed and gave a more than lovely portrayal of our heroine. Her timely exit through the yellow backcloth cleared the

stage for our non- too wicked Stepmother to put in an appearance. She gave a feisty rendition about being beautiful in a comic way, trying to persuade us, the audience, that she really was beautiful. BARBARA MALLORY, in actual fact, was no bad looking gal, which far from making the joke back fire, made us rather happy and relieved. That was the beauty of this delightful piece of theatre. There was nothing or no-one too ugly in it, not even those two sisters, the screechy Bertha and Eartha, who did absolutely nothing to frighten us away. (Hats off to MALLORY here - our splendid puppeteer!)

The Set...



Constance Jewell Lopez, David P. Johnson as the Prince, Charleene Closshey, Barbara Mallory as Stepmother. Photo credit: Dina Morrone.

The set served us well with the obligatory fireplace and broom. A chair with a basket full of dusters upon it left us in no doubt that Cinderella's life was all chores. Centre stage, the castle with a flag on top reminded us that royalty abounds in this tale- in the form of an extremely Handsome Prince, played majestically by (DAVID P JOHNSON). The Costume Department excelled with dazzling outfits in colours befitting each character unequivocally; but this show is not about set, props or any other such theatrical aid, it is about bright, engaging performances, bringing well-loved characters to life and to the attention of a whole new wide-eyed audience. This captivating show affords plenty opportunities for the kids to participate, letting us in on the Director, ANTHONY GRUPPUSCO'S obvious intention of casting the limelight far beyond the players on stage.

There were so many moments when enthralled young audience members were allowed to steal the show. One instance was when his Highness, who galloped into the picture mounted on a striking white steed, led several very willing participants, also riding fine horses, around the auditorium. Under his careful guidance they arrived safely at Cinderella's abode and once dismounted were led up onto the boards and into the midst of the proceedings.

So Many Moments...



Cinderella and Her Prince Charming

There were so many moments when enthralled young audience members were allowed to steal the show. One instance was when his Highness, who galloped into the picture mounted on a striking white steed, led several very willing participants, also riding fine horses, around the auditorium. Under his careful guidance they arrived safely at Cinderella's abode and once dismounted were led up onto the boards and into the midst of the proceedings.

Invitations to the Grand Ball...



All the children were invited to the Ball!

Everyone, including my two grandchildren, listened carefully as invitations to the Grand Ball were read out and when later the children themselves were invited to come along, there was no shortage of attendees. And after the ball was over? Well some lucky little ones got the chance to try on the glass slipper. Wow! It must be noted, there was genuine disappointment on some of the little faces when they realized the glass slipper didn't fit and they would not be able to marry the Handsome Prince. At one point I distinctly heard someone crying and hoped most sincerely it was because of dropped candy rather than the wrong shoe size! (One game Dad also had a go at trying on the slipper, an uproarious moment, much appreciated by the crowd).

A Special Mention...



All the children were invited to the Ball!

A special mention must go to the tremendous Fairy Godmother (CONSTANCE JEWELL LOPEZ). As the actor's name suggests, she gave a gem of a performance. Her fine delivery of the song "I Believe" was inspirational and the kids joined in with gusto, believing with all their might that anything can happen if you believe hard enough. And happen it did as Cinderella's rags were turned neatly into glad rags and in lieu of a coach a big pink Space Hopper was conjured up from a handy pumpkin. It was exhilarating watching our leading lady bounce around the stage on her exhausting mode of transport. When she finally bounced off to the ball, those jealous stepsisters came a-looking for her but no-one was going to tell them of her whereabouts.

After the intermission, which included free juice and cookies (such value for money!), the ball got into full swing with only the Fairy Godmother worrying about the midnight curfew. The lucky children attending the ball were taught how to address the Prince when he arrived. There was much curtsying and bowing and when he finally rode in, some of our little guests were thrilled to have a dance with him. And then he took the fair Cinderella into his arms and entranced us all - until the clock began to strike twelve. Fleeing away mid-waltz, Cinderella got only halfway up the aisle when she 'remembered' she was meant to be losing her slipper about now. She had difficulty shaking off her see through footwear and there was a fun moment as she tried to 'wriggle' out of it. The grown-ups loved this farcical vignette and savoured being "in the know". Another nice touch was when she left the glass slipper in the care of my youngest charge. She was advised not to let it out of her sight because the slipper was possibly vital to the story later on - another "in the know" gag. Cynthia dutifully cradled the slipper with commitment and seriousness, melting quite a few hearts in the process.

As expected, it all ended up happily ever after. The Handsome Prince got his fair maid and Cinderella got her man - a prince who could ride a horse! That was important to her and she said as much as she sang about it at the beginning of the show. Composer, MICHAEL PAUL, must have been very happy with the fine renditions of his songs, all of which embodied some very precious moments. A fine script by LLOYD J SCHWARTZ gave our players lots to draw on and the simplicity and purity of the production brought a lump to my throat.

GO SEE IT AND BELIEVE!

I thought I might have missed the pumpkin turning into a golden coach or white mice becoming white horses, but I didn't. Storybook Theatre proved that the only magic needed in a fairy tale such as this, is the magic found in the eyes of the beholders - our children. This charming musical was incredibly uplifting and did not lose any of the truth that was

created 'once upon a time'. We left the theatre glowing and a comment from my eldest granddaughter, Stella, summed up our afternoon perfectly ... "I'm so sorry it's over, Nano," she said, "I really wish we could watch it again". And I knew exactly what she meant.

GO SEE IT AND BELIEVE!

Jen Brown
