



'Emily the Musical' wins Best of Venue at Center for Spiritual Living

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The life of American poet Emily Dickinson comes into a different focus with the new production "Emily the Musical" written/composed/performed by Isabella Pichardo, that captured Best of Venue (Center for Spiritual Living), at the 2019 KC Fringe Festival.

The story written by Pichardo comes from a fresh up-and-coming talent still shy of her 20 birthday. Pichardo and her cast performed five times at the KC Fringe Fest with a strong following—enough to secure her win as Best of Center for Spiritual Living which earned them a bonus performance on Sunday, July 28. Quite an achievement in the adult Fringe Festival.

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Pichardo explores the world of the reclusive poet and looks at some of the events that changed her life. Dickinson lost several persons close to her in her early years—cousin, mother, father, boyfriend/confidant. The show also suggests her attraction to her best friend, another female at a time when such attraction would not be as accepted as today.

The story tells of the feelings and the reclusive nature of the American poet and how many of her words were self-destructed which suggests Dickinson had mental demons from which no one could shield her.

The show definitely entertains on different levels. Part of the dialogue uses cell phones to communicate, but in Emily's time, telephones did not yet exist. The dialogue is modern and the relationships are modern in scope and appearance. The music definitely sounds modern and well-composed. The lyrics mirror Dickinson's



simple words and phrases. So, the audience sees Emily in modern terms yet the story reflects her 1800s form as well.

That's a lot of show to cram into one hour. With some polish and added content this show could expand to a 90-minute one act play. A lot of content was neglected in telling the story, so much can be added.

What is so amazing and pointed out in "Emily the Musical" lies in the fact that Dickinson did not like school and quit college after a few months, yet became the only major female poet to find recognition. Her poems remain in American literature texts, still.

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The songs in the musical, all ballads, contain an element of hope and also loneliness. Because they are fresh and unknown, remembering the words are content are difficult to remember. Audiences need to focus on them when they begin.

For the cast, “Emily the Musical” found really strong voices to put her words out to the public. Musically, the vocals were clear, pleasant, and blended well together. Sound and lights were well done. For a quick Fringe show, “Emily the Musical” deserved the strong following.

The play discusses the fact that Dickinson remained secluded and in her bedroom for almost 30 years, mostly reading and writing. Sadly much of that material was destroyed by Dickinson.

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“Through heartbreaking losses and influential people, inspiration for her groundbreaking poetry is found. Scenes and songs are infused with direct excerpts from the writings of Dickinson, giving the viewer a peek directly into her mind. Written by Isabella Pichardo with material by Daniel Verschelden.” (KC Fringe)

The cast and crew are: Isabella Pichardo – Playwright/Composer/Emily Dickinson, Lily Nicholas – Director, Connor Hodes – Music Director, Emily Blackwell – Marketing anager, Abigail Becker – Lavinia Dickinson, Cassandra Caruso – Susan, Brayden Dannecker – Charles Wadsworth, Lily Cosgrove – Mother, Randall Jackson – Edward Dickinson, Steven Ansel



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James – Austin Dickinson, Juliana Allen – Sophia, Additional

material by Daniel Verschelden, orchestrations by Daniel Verschelden.

Tags: "Emily" review, Kansas City Fringe Festival, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment, Center for Spiritual Living

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