



MTKC brings fresh look to 'Pippin'

Musical Theatre Kansas City
Pro



Musical Theatre Kansas City Pro opened their newest weekend production of "Pippin" on Thursday night, June 13 at B & B Theaters to an enthusiastic crowd ready to travel back in time to the reign of King Charlemagne of France in the 800s with a focus on his eldest son, Prince Pippin.



Shannon Hauser/Musical Theatre

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The original Broadway version played nearly 2,000

performances, and starred Broadway legend Ben Vereen in one of his early career-building roles. Also notable in the Broadway opening night cast, Irene Ryan as Berte, better known to TV audiences as Granny of *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

Putting those items aside, MTKC cast Lindsey Hailes in the Ben Vereen role of Leading Player and Tony Carrubba as Pippin. The two dominated the stage and kept the story fresh and alive. Hailes' dance moves reminded of the Bob Fosse direction that made "Pippin" famous. Her costumes combined with her vocal and dance execution to create a staggering and sexy opening to the show. Her line delivery throughout the show made the show fun as she chided characters for what lines to deliver and how to deliver them as she stepped into and out of the story.



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Besides Hailes, Carrubba played the innocent, fresh faced, naive Prince Pippin. Carrubba's strong voice delivered the show's most memorable ballad, "Corner of the Sky" with a touch of inquisitiveness, hope, and determination. Unfortunately, and like many common men, the future does not always follow a worn path. Pippin learns that happiness and success come with high prices. Dreams do not always come true; and, happy endings are not guaranteed.

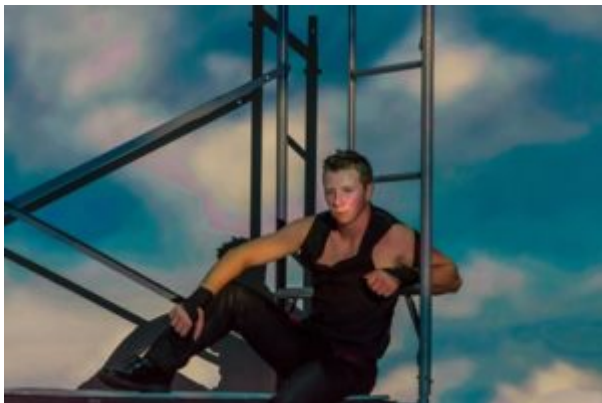


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Carrubba navigates the complex character with authority and gives a strong performance in a show where the hero is not always the victor. His delivery of the part is good, convincing, and appropriate for a young man in quest of his future.

Another character of note is the character of Charlemagne (Charles—in this case). Zak Smith showed great stage presence and dominance in his scenes and Charles the Great of France, Pippin's father. Jessica Alcorn as a wicked step-mother displayed both the comedic talent and vocal chops as well. Also of note were several tumbling stunts in a couple of the dance sequences, mostly performed by Jake Elliott. Ballet moves, including some one leg spins were done with great precision by Victor Rocha. He does a series of about 6 leg extended spins in Act II that will draw the audience's attention and deserves separate applauds.



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And, what would “Pippin” be without the artistry of Bob Fosse, one of the most celebrated and well known choreographers in Broadway history? In this version, according to Julie Danielson, musical director, most of the Fosse-specific choreography was from Trevor Downey. Downey performs in the show as well as helped with the choreography.



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Of special note, the lighting and projection were outstanding. Sound was strong throughout and the costumes were appropriate for the show. All the technical aspects of the MTKC’s production were well thought out and helped move the show forward.

Overall, the MTKC production is a crowd pleaser and is tailored for a mature audience that understands that musical theatre is not the old standard of musical comedy. “Pippin” has many funny lines and some light hearted moments, but it is far from the musical comedy genre associated with musicals of bygone days. Younger audiences may find “Pippin” not as interesting as other musical offerings. Still, MTKC does a beautiful job with this production, and the revival version they produced is more streamlined and easier to follow than the original.



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“Pippin” Cast: Tony Carrubba as Pippin, Lindsey Hailes as Leading Player, Mary-Elizabeth Milton as Catherine, Zak Smith as Charles, Jessica Alcorn as Fastrada, Noah Lindquist as Lewis, Cary Danielson Pandzic as Berthe, Tate Langston as Theo. Ensemble members are: Jake Bartley, Rebecca Carroll, Sarah Dao, Jordan DeLeon, Ryan Dervin, Trevor Towner, Jake Elliott, Tasia Jewell, Daria LeGrand, Brooke McDonough, Victor Rocha, Amara Webb.

The Creative Team for “Pippin” is: Roy Lightner, director; Julie Danielson, music director; Anna Torchia, stage manager; Roy Lightner, choreographer; Trevor Downey assistant choreographer; lighting designer; Conor Tierney, projection designer; Sean Lestico, sound designer;; Colleen Markman, costume designer; Giana Epps, costume designer; Nancy Schnegelberger, properties; Jake Elliott, set preparation; Tim Elliott, set preparation; Jason Torrey, production assistant.



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Conducted by musical director Julie Danielson, the “Pippin” orchestra is: Jacob Thomas, Katherine Turner, keyboards; Madison Ryan, violin; Erin Doyle, flute, piccolo, clarinet, recorder; Danielle Mays, flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano sax; Kevin Hupe, trumpet; Chacko Finn, trombone; Chris Clements, guitar, banjo, mandolin, ukelele; Olivia Massey, bass; Kevin Pham, drums; Charlie Betzelberger, percussion.

“Pippin” runs for one weekend only, June 13-16 at the B&B Theaters near I-435 and Midland Drive in Shawnee Mission. This is the Broadway revival version and more streamlined than the original production. Music and lyrics were by Stephen Schwartz with book by Roger O. Hirson.

Tags: MTKC, “Pippin” review, B&B Theaters, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment