



# Unlocked potential spurs rock success

By Bob Evans

School of Rock National  
American Tour



Pressure to succeed puts locks on a group of students until their creativity and worth take an unexpected turn for the better when an “accidental” substitute teacher unlocks their minds, believes in them, and forms them into a hard rock band in the Andrew Lloyd Webber Broadway musical, “School of Rock,” that opened Nov. 13 for a one-week run at the Music Hall.

Kansas City, Missouri’s downtown venue for touring Broadway musicals, the Music Hall opened the Broadway hit to a near capacity crowd on hand to see and experience the magic that music and the Arts have on young, impressionable minds. The story, based on a hit movie, added music, lyrics, choreography, and stage magic to create a full evening of fun with the most talented young cast actually playing the instruments for the production. And, to verify the expertise

of the audience, a pre-show voice-over of Sir Webber confirms that, yes, the cast really plays the instruments.



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“School of Rock” currently runs on Broadway but its runs ends in January, unless extended, but the first traveling production just arrived in KC for the first time. Opening night proved the power of lead actor, Merritt David Janes, to carry the show and deliver a spirited performance to a tough crowd.

Orchestra seating for the Sabates Eye Centers Broadway Series does not put younger audience members in the front seats as younger person’s do not generally purchase season tickets or orchestra seats. Rather, mature attendees fill the lower seats. Even so, Janes performed to perfection and won the crowd as the show unfolded. His energy alone encouraged the crowd to relax and enjoy the performance. By the time the students began discovering their musical talents, the audience was at the mercy of the performers.

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Lexie Dorsett Sharp provided the perfect foil for Dewey, the un-fit, un-schooled, un-educated substitute teacher. As

Rosalie, she and Dewey sparred from onset, but their charm let the audience know that their story would involve more as the show progresses. Sharp and Janes perfectly clash in this musical comedy.

The story of the show is simplistic. A down and out band member goes to sub in a private school where academics is stressed. Students feel the pressure to succeed, but all have personal and private needs not met at home or in books. The always underperforming substitute unlocks their rigidity and allow them to discover their inner talents and find self-confidence. And, then there is the big show at the end.



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The show is reminiscent of the old Mickey Rooney/Judy Garland films where there is always a show that becomes the focus. Similarly, The Little Rascals or Our Gang comedies used the same format. It worked then and works now. People enjoy a comedy without deep meaning or message. "School of Rock" delivers just that—entertainment.

As for the young performers on stage. Expect to be amazed with their talent. Their performances, phenomenal and professional generate excitement and energy.

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“School of Rock” brings fun and humor to the stage through rock ‘n roll music, without the use of profanity, nudity, adult situations or other serious issues. Pure fun exudes from the cast as they perform. The show is appropriate for all ages and deserves great audience support, and especially more younger audience members.

“School of Rock” continues at the Music Hall and tickets can be found online, purchased by phone, or at the box office.

Tags: School of Rock, Sabates Eye Center Broadway Series, American Theatre Guild of Kansas City, Music Hall, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment