

Review: Broadway's ANASTASIA Delights at Washington Pavilion

ANASTASIA is certainly a theatrical experience not soon forgotten.

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by Sonja Niles Jun. 18, 2022



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ANASTASIA at the Washington Pavilion certainly gave Sioux Falls audiences an opportunity to be surprised and delighted.

The visual presentation of projections and lighting effects was glorious; a feast for the imagination. In many ways, these aspects were the brightest stars of the show; at times upstaging the actors' performances on stage. The company vocals of Russian melodies were powerful and haunting and the combination of all the technical sound effects were most certainly a mastery of levels and balance.

The story of ANASTASIA is a fairy tale borne of tragedy and horror in the historic slaying of a royal Russian family; the Romanovs. It's a stain on the culture of a people who are seemingly always in "domination mode". The one glimmer of hope, and conversely a torturous prospect for the Dowager Empress in this story, is that her favorite granddaughter, Anastasia, may have survived the horror. Years later at her home in Paris, the Dowager Empress is besieged with letters and visits from young women claiming to be her beloved Anastasia and heir apparent to the Romanov fortune. The strain of so many hopes dashed is apparent in the portrayal of

the Dowager Empress, played by **Gerri Weagraff**. There is a defeated and depressing weight to her character portrayal.

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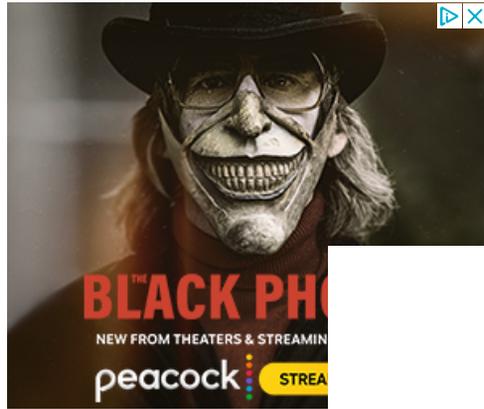
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Kyla Stone, playing Anastasia, has the vocal intensity to draw in the audience immediately and hold their attention with finesse and feeling. Her energy and posture on stage is youthful, optimistic and wonderful. She embodies her character and the conflicted circumstances in the evolution and development of her own memory as well as the tutorials of Dimitry and Vlad. William Aaron Bishop, playing Dimitry in this production was physically and vocally adept at creating the character of a young man desperate for a way out of the squalor of his life in Russia. Bryan Seastrom, playing Vlad, had some lovely comedic moments with Dimitry and then later with the Countess Lily, portrayed by Madeline Raube. It was their song "The Countess and The Common Man", that stole the show in Act Two. The choreography, physical stage business and comedic timing in this song were all brilliant. The most commanding voice on stage was Ben Endquist, playing

Gleb (a reluctant villain). The power and tonality of his voice was exquisitely reverberate and resonant.



On the whole, Act One of this production was a fascinating experience of a visual and auditory adventure for the audience. The costumes, lighting, and projections were all integral contributors to the

"wow factor" of this production. The business in Act Two, taking place in Paris, had most of its' highlights in the presentation of some lovely ballet dancing and the romantic scenic projections of the city of lights.

ANASTASIA is certainly a theatrical experience not soon forgotten. It is part Disney Princess theme, part video game technology "pizzazz", and part historic mystery/rumor lore that all somehow add up to a conventionally modern musical theatre adventure. Audiences in Sioux Falls have two more opportunities to experience this show at 2:00 pm and 7:30 pm today at the Mary Sommervold Hall of the Washington Pavilion.

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FROM THIS AUTHOR - SONJA NILES

Sonja Niles has 40 plus years in theatre performance and directing and has been a guest director throughout South Dakota and Montana. Sonja