



An Elegant 'American In Paris' At Cape Playhouse

by Amy Tagliaferri

"They Can't Take That Away From Me."

Director/choreographer Al Blackstone and the entire company of "An American in Paris" must have heard that Gershwin tune playing in their heads as they returned to the Cape Playhouse for another run of this production. The first was shortened by the pandemic after only a few performances a couple years ago.

"We are so grateful to be back at this iconic theater to share our hard work and passion with your warm and wonderful community," said Blackstone. You're grateful? Cape theatergoers will all agree that they are grateful for a second chance to see this show.

This show is spellbinding from beginning to end. I was fortunate enough to stage manage a couple shows where I learned how a director takes a detailed vision and translates it into a performance. Every little detail is important, and when it all comes together it's a feast for all the senses. Blackstone and his team painted such a detailed picture that we, the audience, loved every single moment.

"An American in Paris," inspired by Vicente Minelli's 1951 film which won six Oscars, with music and lyrics by George and Ira Gershwin, stage adaptation by Christopher Weldon and book by Craig Lucas, is a timeless musical set in an unsettling time in our history, the aftermath of World War II. In 1945, the City of Lights is still reeling from a Nazi occupation that was devastating both physically and morally. But love always finds a way, especially in Paris!

Jerry Mulligan (a very boisterous Josh Drake) is an American soldier who remains in Paris to paint and his friend Adam Hochburg (a cute-as-the-devil Barrett Riggins) is a musician. Things get complicated when they both fall for the same girl, Lise Dassin (the elegant Leigh-Ann Esty) who is engaged to their new friend, a wanna-be Parisian nightclub singer Henri Bourel (a like-able Bruce Landry). It's in essence a story of love found, love lost and love won mostly told in song and dance with Gershwin tunes heavily sprinkled throughout. It is "S'Wonderful."

Other performances worth noting were Madame and



Leigh-Ann Esty as Lise Dassin and Josh Drake as Jerry Mulligan in "An American in Paris" at the Cape Playhouse. MAGGIE HALL PHOTOGRAPHY

Monsieur Bourel (Jack Doyle and Jennifer Smith) as Henri's haughty parents, and Manna Nichols as Milo Davenport, who was very cool, calm and collected as another love interest. The entire company is fantastic, never missing a step, and the show flows along flawlessly. The ensemble rocked the song and dance numbers and the myriad costume changes and set changes with confidence and style. They are Michael McBride, Marc Caradarelli, Katie Griffith, Melissa Hunt, Hannah Jennens, Will Jewett, Konnor Kelly, David Paul Kidder, Mallory Pattee, Makayla Ryan, Luis Villar and Kristen Yancy.

"An American in Paris"
At the Cape Playhouse,
820 Main St., Dennis
Through Aug. 12,
Monday to Saturday at 7:30 p.m.;
Wednesday and Thursday at 2 p.m.
Information and reservations:
508-385-3911, www.capeplayhouse.com

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The familiar music and lyrics ("I Got Rhythm," "The Man I Love," "Shall We Dance" and more) are a bonus to the marvelous dance numbers. The orchestra of nearly a dozen musicians was also great. Kudos to Matthew Smedal, the music director, and his assistant Anthony Zediker. Even set changes were a joy to watch. Our hats are off to David Arsenaault's awesome set design, DW's costume design (Lise's ballet number, wow!) along with Kirk Bookman (lighting design), Jacob Levitin (sound design), and Rachel Kaplow, Susan Cady, and Daniel Whiting (production stage manager, company manager and production manager respectively). Blackstone, with assistant director/choreographer Melissa Hunt, wowed us from the start with the dance routines. Blackstone, an Emmy winner for his work on "So You Think You Can Dance," is known for combining storytelling with dance, the perfect combination for this show! (Google his Mr. Bojangles routine from SYTYCD.)

You won't want the two-and-a-half-hour show (with a 15-minute intermission) to end! So dance your "Fidgety Feet" over to the Cape Playhouse box office and get your tickets today!

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