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MATILDA THE MUSICAL

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WOW!

As deliciously dark as it is uplifting and empowering, Matilda The Musical has arrived at La Mirada Theatre For The Performing Arts to charm and delight audiences of all ages.

Child phenom Audrey Cymone stars as Matilda Wormwood, born to parents who don't deserve a child as brilliant as the one they've been blessed with.



Her peroxide-blond mother (Erica Hanrahan) is such a dolt, even nine months pregnant she's convinced she's just "fat," and Mrs. Wormwood's green-haired hubby (Josh Adamson) is no less of a nitwit, blissfully clueless that his second-born is a girl.



ABOUT STAGESCENE LA

Since 2007, Steven Stanley's StageSceneLA.com has spotlighted the best in Southern California theater via reviews, interviews, and its annual StageSceneLA Scenies.

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Fortunately for our plucky young heroine, a love for books not shared by her telly-obsessed family (completed by Erik Hall's simpleton older brother Michael) helps make her away-from-home life bearable, as do an eclectic band of classmates, a helpful librarian from the exotic West Indies (Constance Jewell Lopez as Mrs. Phelps), and above all World's Best Teacher Miss Honey (Nicole Santiago).

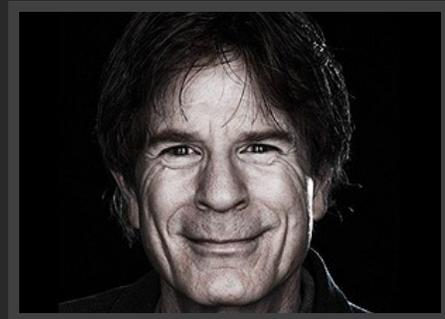
Less agreeable is the ever looming presence of child-abhorring, discipline-loving headmistress Miss Trunchbull (Michael A. Shepperd), bent on making her pint-sized charges' lives a living hell.

Songwriter Tim Minchin has written one catchy, occasionally heartstrings-tugging ditty after another, and with *Matilda The Musical's* original West End/Broadway associate choreographer Kate Dunn given the chance to do her own thing at La Mirada, audiences are treated to some of the most infectiously energetic, story-propelling dance moves in town.



Though book writer Kelly tags on his own rather unnecessary subplot involving the Russian mafia and an

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ABOUT STEVEN STANLEY

As editor of StageSceneLA.com, Steven Stanley is one of Los Angeles' most prolific theater reviewers. He is also the author of *Moroccan Roll*, and an ESL instructor in the English Language Program at California State University, Los Angeles since 1979. ([read more](#))

photo credit: Eric Schwabel

original fairy tale to boot, the former does inspire a wacky eleventh-hour twist while the latter gives the musical a powerful emotional coda.

As for Matilda's telekinetic powers (Oops! Was that a spoiler?), they occur so much later than they do in Danny DeVito's Americanized 1996 screen adaptation (one of my all-time faves) that movie fans may find themselves a bit let down by how little a part they play in *Matilda The Musical*, but this is a minor quibble.

A bit more problematic is the decision to retain the novel's original English setting and East London accents so thick that despite sound designer Josh Bessom's best efforts, even ears normally attuned to British accents may find themselves wondering what the bloomin' 'ell these blokes and nippers are speaking and singing about, especially when so much dialog (*Matilda's* fairy tale in particular) is musically underscored.



Fortunately at La Mirada, Michael Matthews' direction is so inspired and the performances he has elicited so magical that audiences will be hard-pressed to resist standing up and cheering this ultimate girl-power musical.



Cymone may have only just turned ten, but she's got the confidence, stage presence, and talent of the stage vets who surround her, chief among them Adamson's criminally crazed Mr. Wormwood and Hanrahan's daffily dance-obsessed Mrs. Wormwood, each one zanier and more scene-stealing than the other, and just wait till Hanrahan belts out a "Loud" that more than lives up to its title.



As for Matilda's nemesis, rarely if ever has a Miss Trunchbull combined the divine Shepperd's mountainous frame, scenery-chewing villainy, and vowels so tight, they would do Elizabeth II proud.

Santiago makes for a heartfelt honey of a Miss Honey, with a honey of a voice to match, Hall's Michael could not be more adorably dull-witted, and Lopez's Mrs. Phelps is kindness and warmth personified.



Danil Chernyy's outrageously outlandish Rudolpho is so possessed by the Devil Of Dance that Tom Bergeron and Erin Andrews might want to give him a call, Juan Guillen's Russian mobster Sergei would do the current White House proud, Brandon Keith Rogers and Veronica Gutierrez add their own magic as Escapologist and Acrobat, and Rees James makes for the hunkiest of OB-GYNs.



Chernyy, Guillen, dance captain Gutierrez, Hall, James, and Rogers earn additional enthusiastic cheers as parents, tweens, Russian mafiosi, and circus performers, as do their equally talented ensemble compatriots Carly Haig, Angeline Miranda, Jay Robinson, and Liz B. Williams.

stage manager.



Celebrating intelligence of birth, family of choice, and the friendships that can make life livable, *Matilda The Musical* is another La Mirada/McCoy Rigby smash, and so adult-friendly, you just might decide to leave the kids at home.

La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, 14900 La Mirada Boulevard, La Mirada. Through November 17. Wednesdays and Thursdays at 7:30; Fridays at 8:00; Saturdays at 2:00 and 8:00 and Sundays at 2:00. Also Friday November 15 at 1:00. Tickets: 562 944-9801 or 714 994-6310

www.lamiradatheatre.com

–Steven Stanley
October 26, 2019
Photos: Jason Niedle

Tags: Dennis Kelly, La Mirada Theatre For The Performing Arts, Los Angeles Theater Review, McCoy Rigby Entertainment, Roald Dahl, Tim Minchin