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REVIEW: "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT" — La Mirada Theatre & McCoy Rigby

Updated: Jun 7

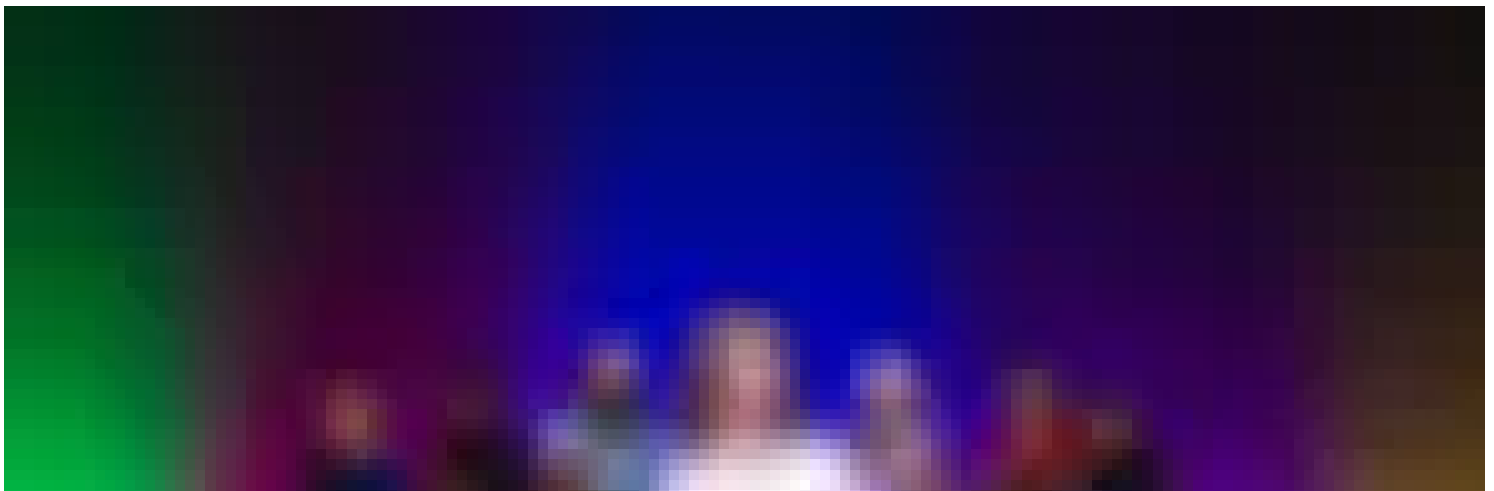
An Electrifying Songfest of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

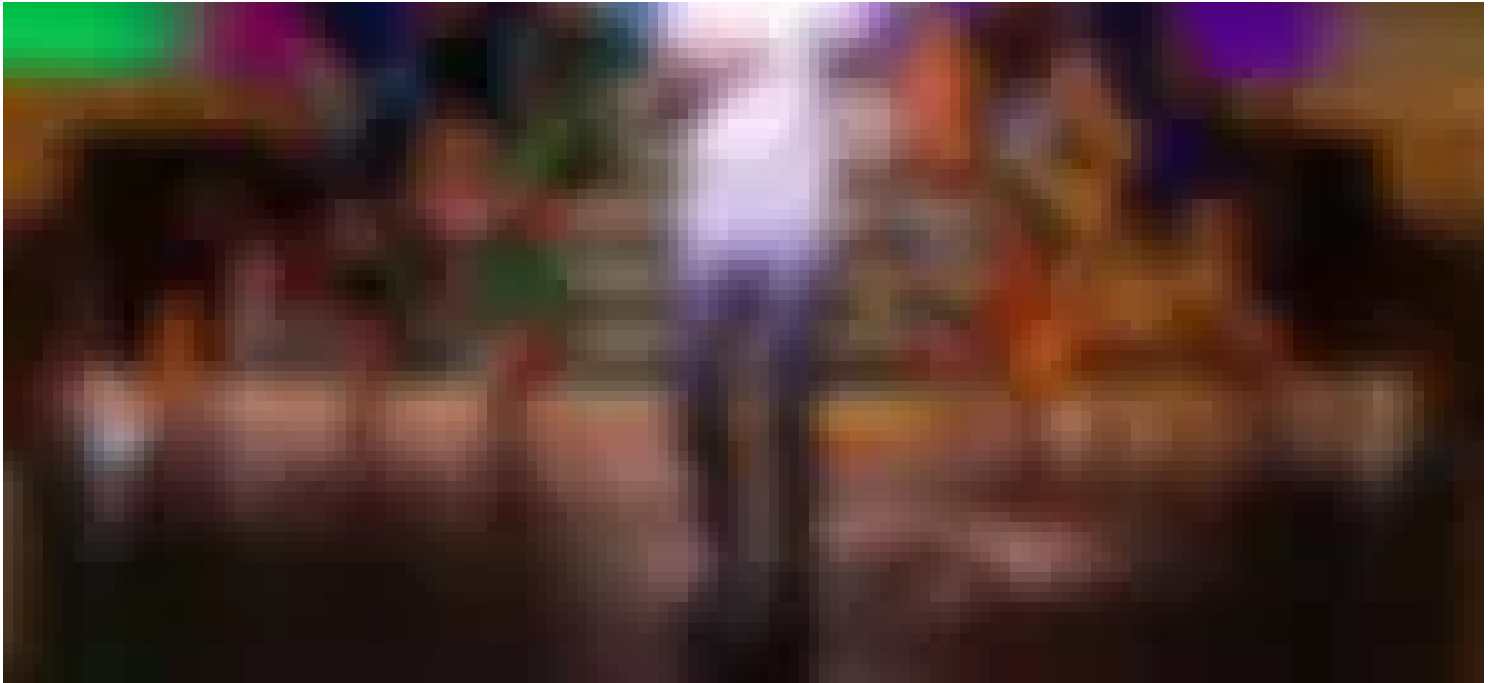


JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT was first presented as a 15-minute pop cantata at a London boys school in 1968, but was kept under the radar while being fully developed by young dynamic duo Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, both still in their early twenties. After their success of JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR in 1970, however, JOSEPH...was finally launched with a 35-minute professional premiere at the Haymarket ice rink during the Edinburgh International Festival of 1972.

A full ten years later, the musical was mounted on Broadway at the Royale Theater, producing 747 performances, and receiving six Tony nominations. David Cassidy took over the role of Joseph in March

1983, and also performed in the touring cast in 1983–1984. Into the 90's, there were several major adaptations and revivals, the most prominent starring Michael Damian, and then a five-year national tour starring Donny Osmond with over 2000 performances.





Chris McCarrell (center) and the "Children's Choir" star in the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Now, La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts and McCoy Rigby Entertainment has collaborated to provide a new, lively restaging of this Old Testament story performing through June 25th, starring Broadway alumni Chris McCarrell playing the part of Joseph, and Kelli Rabke (who was handpicked by Andrew Lloyd Webber to perform the same part in the Broadway "JOSEPH..." revival) as the Narrator.



Chris McCarrell (center) with the company star in the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

In case you're somehow not familiar with the show, it tells the story of a biblical boy who made good, in a story arc so simple it reads like a parable. And for those with repeated viewings, you may recall Joseph is given a glitzy, multi-colored coat by his doting dad, Jacob (Peter Allen Vogt), the Hebrew patriarch who was the grandson of Abraham, inciting bitter jealousy among his many brothers, eleven in all.

As the story goes, his rugged good looks, his skills at dream interpretation, and especially that titular technicolor coat earn him the wrath and envy of all his siblings, who secretly fake his death and sell him into slavery to some Ishmaelites. But rest assured, all will be set right, because, as the Narrator reminds us in song, "We've read the book, and you come out on top."



The company of the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

And sure enough, after a rollercoaster rise to fame and fortune in Egypt (although sprinkled with a few liberalities from the Bible account), Joseph ends in Egypt where his skill as an interpreter of dreams draws the attention of the Pharaoh. Luckily, Joseph's vision of the future spared the Egyptians from famine (the famous seven years of plenty followed by seven lean years) and led the Pharaoh to make Joseph his second in command.



Kelli Rabke (center) and the "Children's Choir" star in the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

The show is a sung-through pastiche piece using rock, country, western, calypso, French chanson and other styles of music, and retains all the sparkling wit, styles and melodies of the original Broadway musical. It's a virtual banquet of instantly singable hits such as "Any Dream Will Do," which unfailingly makes the whole audience tear up a bit; a twangy, western elegy to Joseph called "One More Angel in Heaven," which readily shifts into a big hoedown dance sequence; a very splendid Jacques Brel-like cabaret ode to better times called, "Those Canaan Days," which is quite animated by all the brothers as if they were a vocally blended single organism, receiving the loudest applause of the night. And yet, with all that color, all that charm, all those melodies floating in the air, the children's chorus (most all within the first few grades, originally designed as support vocals and harmony) quite frequently steal the show from the main players.



Daniel Dawson and Chris McCarrell (center) with the company of the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Many of those melodies include the catchy cheer song, "Go, Go, Go, Joseph," along with an island rhythm reggae song called "Benjamin Calypso," featuring Ceron Jones as Judah. But one of the highlights of the roughly two hour extravaganza is a rock-and-roll recounting of Pharaoh's dream ("Song of the King"), performed by an Elvis Presley-style Pharaoh (Daniel Dawson, who also doubles as Levi, one of Jacob's sons, showing off one of the best numbers of the night), decked out in silk jumpsuit, cape, sideburns, and of course, blue suede shoes. He is the King, after all.



Chris McCarrell (center) and the "Children's Choir" star in the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Gerry McIntyre's direction and choreography is both razor-focused and efficient; he leverages the tremendous talent of each ensemble member and principal performer perfectly. The men playing Joseph's 11 brothers, performed by Daniel Dawson, James Everts, Josh Grisetti, Juan Guillen, Ceron Jones, Kurt Kemper, Edgar Lopez, Rorey Michelangelo, Dino Nicandros, Marcus Phillips and Brandon Keith Rogers are delightful, as are their wives, who provide the charm to those vivacious dance routines.

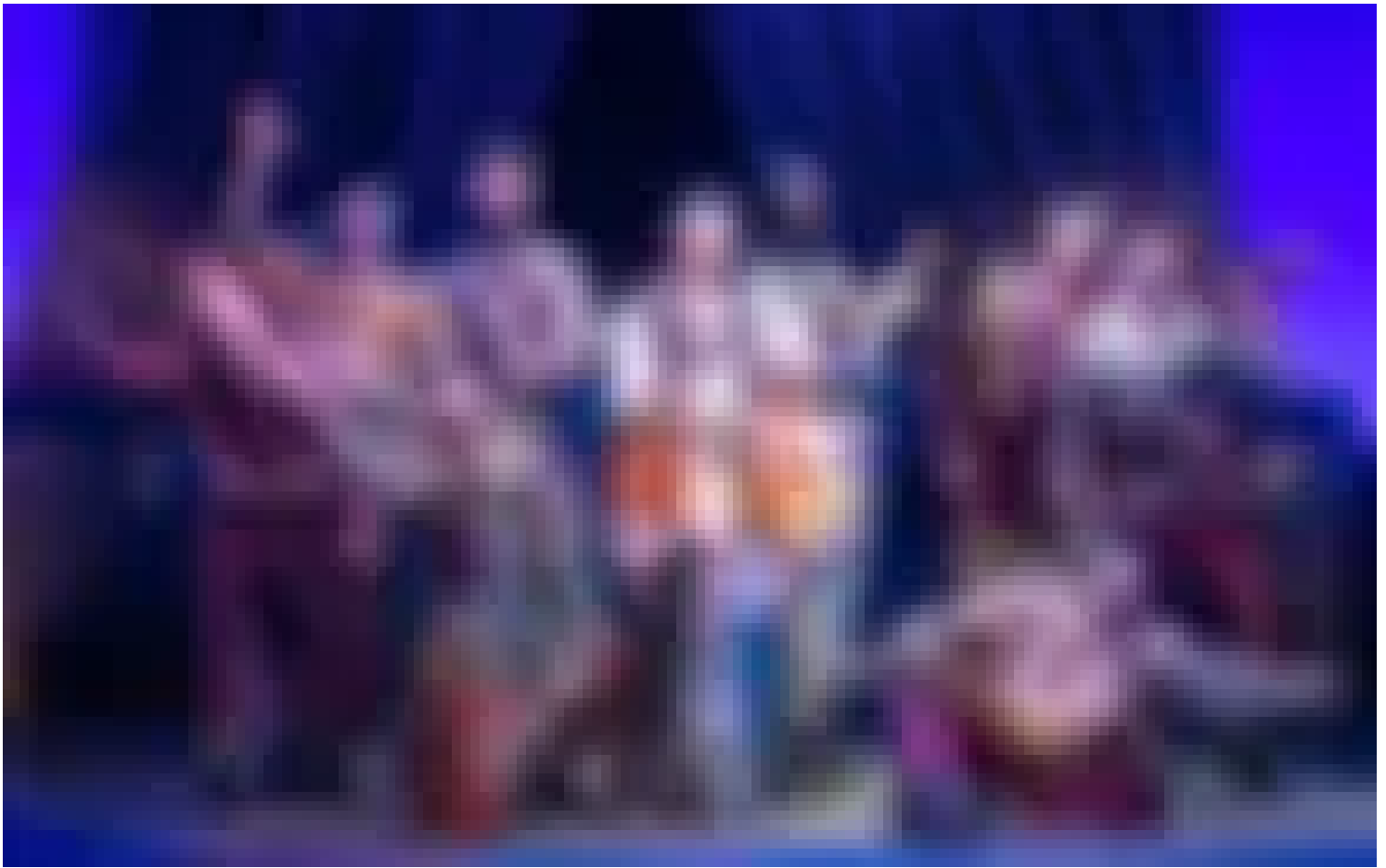
They all deliver fully fleshed-out characters with triple-threat skills and exaggerated hamminess on full display, resulting in a joyous, timeless show...a show that is so endearingly honest and entertaining, it gives us pure joy of the liveliest, larkiest kind.



Kelli Rabke (center) with the company of the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts & McCoy Rigby Entertainment production of "JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT," directed and choreographed by Gerry McIntyre and now playing at La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

One thing for certain: the production at La Mirada Theatre certainly moves with exuberance. Director-choreographer McIntyre has created fantastically energized dance numbers, performed by a terrific ensemble that seem to take flight each time their characters break into dance. Their vocals, too, are spirited, giving full voice to every one of the songs.

Ms. Rabke's Narrator, with her glorious voice, seizes several opportunities to embroider her songs with soaring, sustained notes, and Mr. McCarrell, as straight-arrow Joseph, endowed with an amazingly clarion voice, soars in every number, especially the show's one moment of true heart, "Close Every Door." And Ellie Barrett, who plays Potiphar's Wife as a seductive contortionist, wraps herself around Joseph and chases him around the stage, causing broad smiles and wild applause.



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But just when you think it's over, this JOSEPH... comes alive again in its last 10 minutes, when the entire ensemble appears on stage in white dance clothes to recap, once again, the show's big numbers. Suddenly, Gerry McIntyre's choreography take on a fresh vitality and precision as the songs brim anew with their infectious beats and we feel the need to rise from our seats, lost in those bouncy rhythms, airy melodies and addictive lyrics.

So, a fair warning: Long after the visual spectacle of this production has faded from recollection, you'll probably still be living with fragments of its score for days to come.

LA MIRADA THEATRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS AND MCCOY RIGBY ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS, JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT, with Lyrics by TIM RICE; Music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER; Directed and Choreographed by GERRY MCINTYRE; Musical Direction by JENNIFER LIN; Lighting Design by JEAN-YVES TESSIER; Sound Design by JOSH BESSOM; Co-Hair/Wig/Makeup Design by KAITLIN YAGEN & MADISON MEDRANO; Assistant Choreographer KIM ARNETT; Properties Supervisor KEVIN WILLIAMS; Technical Director KEVIN CLOWES; Production Stage Manager JOHN W. CALDER III; Publicist DAVID ELZER/DEMAND PR.

WITH: CHRIS MCCARRELL • KELLI RABKE • ELLIE BARRETT • BERNADETTE BENTLEY • JOHNISA BREault • JASIANA CARABALLO • DANIEL DAWSON • LAUREN DECIERDO • ANDREA DOBBINS • ASHLEY EVANGELINE • JAMES EVERTS • JOSH GRISETTI • JUAN GUILLEN • MARIE GUTIERREZ • CERON JONES • KURT KEMPER • EDGAR LOPEZ • ROREY MICHELANGELO • ANYSSA NAVARRO • DINO NICANDROS • MARCUS PHILLIPS • BRANDON KEITH ROGERS • CALLULA SAWYER • RIANNY VASQUEZ • PETER ALLEN VOGT • THOMAS WHITCOMB • BRIDGET WHITMAN

CHILDREN'S CHOIR: Sarah Grandpre – Choir Director; Cameron Avery, Rachel Beard, Lucy Benney, Elena Bertacchi, Blake Brunton, Leila Bustamante, Jayda Concepcion, Grace Ella, Brennan Esguerra, Erica Gonzalez, Ellie Gonzalez, Kallie Graham, Abigail Hernandez, Ana Jocson, Grace Jenkins, Raegan Larson, Harper Larson, Stevie Larson, David Last, Annemarie Last, Becca Last, Catherine Last, Elizabeth Last, Adrienne Morrow, Emilie Ong, Angelina Pendleton-Mendez, Hannah Pawlowicz, Hanna Maksimachkina, Delaney Martinez, Jasmine Melwani, Donovan Monroe, Sydney Sublette, Anna Surdina, Erin Tardibuono, Bailey Varga, Ava Villacorta, Obriella Witron, Leila Woodward, Natalie Yokota.

"JOSEPH AND THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAMCOAT" runs June 2nd through June 25th with performances at La Mirada Theatre in La Mirada. Performances are Thursdays at 7:30PM; Fridays at 8PM; Saturdays at 2PM and 8PM; and Sundays at 1:30PM and 6:30PM. Tickets range from \$19-89 and can be purchased at www.LaMiradaTheatre.com or by calling (562)944-9801 or (714) 994-6310.



Chris Daniels
Arts & Entertainment Reviewer
The Show Report

PHOTO CREDIT: Jason Niedle

