

VALLEJO MUSIC THEATRE UPHOLDS TRADITION IN PRODUCTION OF "FIDDLER ON THE ROOF"

Traditions, taboos and change are tireless ingredients for great musical theatre. Since 1964, "Fiddler on the Roof" (Fiddler) has been a traditional staple of college and high school theaters, civic and community performance groups and Broadway. How wonderfully profound it is that a tale set in early 1900's pre Russian revolution rural Ukraine, rich in ethnic flavored songs and folk dance and grounded in devout Jewish orthodoxy, holds such an enormously powerful, popular and timeless message.

In the first scene, we commiserate instantly with rural Jewish milkman Tevye, our beautifully human guide and comically conflicted father of five girls who observes of life that... "A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But here, in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune..." "Yes, Tevye, we all have 'idiot symphonies'; rhythms, rhymes and melodies to our days. "Fiddlers" infectious tunes and tales remind us that although our lives' tunes appear to differ, the melodies are familiar to all.

"Fiddler", a traditional musical where the score directly relates to each character's precise situation, features such Broadway classic sing a longs as, "If I Were a Rich Man," "Sunrise, Sunset," "Matchmaker Matchmaker," and "Tradition!". Every clever line of the libretto is spun in rich melodic and harmonic minor scales and metered out in convincing ethnic expressive dances and gestures. As the chorus exclaims, "Fiddler" is indeed "L' Chaim" - To Life!

Tevye is the canvas upon which the plot paints eternal conflicts of joy and suffering, faith and despair, unbridled passion of youth and wizened yet tired old age, wealth and impoverishment, conciliation and conviction and the inescapable constancy of change and resentment of it. Thus, this mischievous milkman argues with God over life and what it could be like in ... "If I Were a Rich Man". Although Tevye is an unwitting battle ground for conflict, his power to love is unswerving, making him endearing and real.

Over the course of the story, Tevye's daughters make choices against the tradition espoused in "Matchmaker Matchmaker". The eldest child wishes to marry her childhood sweetheart for the most untraditional of reasons; love. The next falls in love with a scholar idealist, ultimately joining him in Siberian exile. Yet the third daughter, Oi Veh! Better she should be dead than marry outside the faith! However, love and family conquers all as even the battle wearied, arranged marriage wife of Tevye of twenty five years, Golde, admits her love in the touching "Do You Love Me". Mozel tov to all!

Religious piety provides beautiful moments in "Sabbath Prayer," the rejoicing of God's mercy in "Miracle of Miracles," and the truths of life's cycles in the haunting "Sunrise, Sunset."

"Fiddler" combines passion, pathos and the simple silliness of daily life with sobering messages about the double sided coin of tradition, the price of devout beliefs and the undying pull of parenthood and

family and change. Tevye, his family and neighbors are not so much characters at evenings end, as they are ordinary people like us.

Traditions at Vallejo Music Theater (VMT) may soon also change as their laudable dream becomes reality; to raise the funds by January 2008 to renovate and occupy the landmark federal building by September 2009. VMT is approaching a 40 year anniversary of contributions to the cultural sustenance of Solano County. The wonderfully engaged folks responsible for the fun production of "Fiddler" at VMT maintain the tradition that Community Theater is of and for the community. This ensemble delivers as a family from the opening blockbuster number to the enthusiastic foyer receiving line formed by the entire cast after final curtain.

VMT's "Fiddler" is a massive undertaking with an enormous cast. The sparse set, simple pre recorded music and technical support and convincing costuming all keep the focus on the story line. VMT insightfully engaged a capable one woman choreographer/director, Pam Lourentzous. "Fiddler" is not a musical which rises or falls on great vocal chops. Thus, the instruction given in both the verbal and non verbal aspects so crucial to a convincing portrayal of "Fiddler" is readily apparent in the directors precise blocking, convincing choreography and scripted moves of the characters. As remarked by Tevye, one does the best they can with what they have to work with and in that regard, VMT production of "Fiddler" delivers the goods with passion and an infectious sense of camaraderie and community between cast and crew.

So listen carefully this week when feeling the conflicting pulls of tradition and the sirens call of temptation. It may well be a fiddler on your roof. See this production and support VMT to continue the wonderful tradition they started 40 years ago.

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