



David Gauci and Davine Productions
Beautiful, The Carole King Musical

Reviewed by Ashleigh Rathjen, Glam Adelaide. 8 July, 2021

Beautiful reveals the life and career of 1970s artist Carole King, her rise to fame and the personal life during those formative years. The show reminds the audience that artists may be responsible for many other musical hits, other than their own, and it was a joy to listen to some classic tunes, knowing now that Carole was involved in their creation.

Director, David Gauci, has effectively utilised the different levels and spaces of the Star Theatre to create different scenes. The use of the stage, as a stage for performers during the show was innovative and clever. While there were larger numbers being performed, however, the spacing made it hard to work out who was singing. There were some moments where transitions were stalled but this was well covered by Musical Director, Peter Johns. Johns brought to life some of the classic big band tunes from the 50s, 60s and 70s, and his orchestra performs them splendidly. There were some balance issues with microphones and sound levels which made it difficult to hear some of the lines in songs. The choreography, by Shenayde Wilkinson-Sarti, is simple and smart, reflecting the eras and transitioning as the story progressed. There were a couple of large ensemble numbers, however, where the stage seemed cluttered and noticeably out of sync. Overall, it emulated the eras effectively, which is something that was also executed by costume designers Louise Watkins and Renee Brice.

Jemma McCulloch embodies Carole King in all the stages of her life, from the innocent, wide eyed, youth, to the succeeding and struggling mother and wife, and finally the matured artist. There were some moments where the switches between light-hearted and serious were jarring and could have used moments of pause. McCulloch's small details add depth and presence to her well-formed characterisation. These are only matched by her beautiful voice, which emulated the tone on Carole King beautifully. Trevor Anderson, as King's husband and musical partner Gerry Goffin,

takes the audience on a journey of emotions from his rising success to his depth of despair.

Maya Miller is a force to be reckoned with as Cynthia Weil. Miller has a strong stance and voice to boot and is a joy to listen to and watch. Joshua Kerr, as Barry Mann, has a brilliant voice, both acting and singing. Kerr matches Miller beautifully; they sound marvellous together and their on-stage relationship was well developed and effortless. Brendon Cooney and Kate Anolak round out the leading cast as Donnie Kirshner, record producer, and Genie Klien, Carole King's mother. Their portrayals of their characters were consistent and well thought out, adding grounding to the overall performance. The cast all have moments on stage to shine. A standout performance comes from Sisilina Saukuru who has a beautiful, honey like voice, perfect for big band numbers.

The set and lighting were simplistic and allowed for a greater use of the space on stage. It was excellent to have use of pianos on stage as well, as they are a huge part of Carole King's life. The use of two large screens creating digital sets was an innovative way to create scene changes. However, due to brightness of these screens cast who were positioned in front occasionally appeared in silhouette, or it became hard to watch due to contrasting levels of lighting between stage lights and the screens. This could be simply fixed by lowering the brightness to allow for a better balance on screen.

Overall, this production was highly entertaining, professionally presented and a great night out. Audience members could not help but get the amazing tunes stuck in their heads.