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# BWW Review: KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL at Virginia Rep's Children's Theatre at Willow Lawn: Squeaky-Clean Fun

by Brent Deekens Aug. 1, 2018

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Photography By Aaron Suttan

Given my own recent (and forthcoming) excursions into the world of children's theatre, it is with an earnest sense of gratitude to divulge that this artistic discipline has undoubtedly grown on me.

The reasons are ample, but one particular instance of circumstantial ebullience really seems to stand out with me (as well as with some familial youth theatre compatriots of mine): this is a short exchange that happens after the final curtain when a determined,

young playgoer embraces an actor emerging from the backstage to excitedly exclaim (verbatim): "You were my favorite! I want to do what you do!"

Just the very inclination of becoming an indirect mentor (of sorts) to an evolving young mind to a future world of artistry, applied skills, and meaningful friendships is an unfathomably profound notion...

And the cast of KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL, based on the book by Mo Willems, radiates charm and whimsy that is sure to inspire virtually any impressionable tot.

After all, the protagonist Trixie (amiably played by Christina Ramsey) is a toddler who can only speak in a cutesy variant of "baby talk": a winsome, phonemic vernacular which culminates into an irresistible ballad titled "Aggle Flaggle Klabble."

I wonder if her target audience could presumably translate the lyrics for us adults - but I digress...

With a libretto and lyrics by Willems and music by Michael Silversher, director/choreographer Susan Sanford and her crew have put together a solid show. And under the musical direction of Jason Marks, the catchy songs - especially "Washy Washy" - sound infectiously crisp.

With Emily Hake Massie's set that has been drolly transplanted to Richmond's Fan District - the architecture and the street signs are clear giveaways - KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL tells the story of a tranquil day when Trixie accompanies her caring but somewhat absent-minded Dad (David Janosik) to the local laundromat to wash a load of dirty clothes. Conflict arises when Trixie's favorite toy - a stuffed green rabbit named Knuffle Bunny - becomes misplaced! And the ensuing adventure to save Knuffle Bunny branches out into some very exciting surprises - especially for the climax!

I won't give anything away, but the climactic fixture to this show is captivatingly clever, hilarious, and flashy. For this bit in the show, major props - pun intended - go to Kylie Clark for her elaborate and seamlessly effective puppet constructions. The fruits of her

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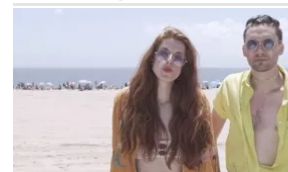


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sterling aptitude must be seen to be believed, and I will not spoil these individual displays with mere words.

And Ms. Clark's creations are maturely handled with care (and stunning vocals) by Brandon James Johns, Corinne MacLean, and "Swing" Eve Marie Tuck; they even dance a couple of jigs.

Rounding out the cast is Louise Ricks as Trixie's Mom: a caring soul who tries to necessitate the need for Dad to better connect with his daughter. Ms. Ricks' expertise in children's theatre continues to radiate as she more than ably inhabits a role that plays to her many talent gifts.

And Mr. Janosik, playing the role with the most catharsis in the piece, adroitly carries himself to further prove his standing as being one of the finest actors in Richmond. His every move, whether subtle or striking, is genuine and inspiring.

With appropriate costumes by Ruth Hedberg and some rather nifty lighting by BJ Wilkinson, KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL can be an all-out swell time for the whole family, though it's admittedly geared towards kids.

Still, children's theatre is an arena that will always have an eager audience - probably the most gracious and receptive, too.

It's just to the fortunate circumstances of the audience that the cast and crew of KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL are assumed by master craftspeople housed within the welcoming venue that is the space at Willow Lawn.

KNUFFLE BUNNY: A CAUTIONARY MUSICAL plays at Virginia Rep's Children's Theatre at Willow Lawn through the 12th of August, 2018

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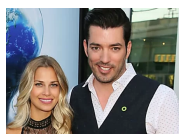
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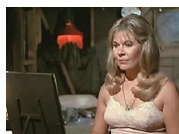
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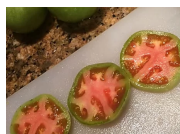
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Brent Deekens is an actor, singer, playwright, and occasional director/dancer. Brent's play The Currency premiered Off-Off-Broadway in 2015, and he continues to write for future [\(read more...\)](#)

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