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A reason to celebrate

Camelot Theatre's '42nd Street' is a toast to Broadway productions

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Galen Schloming plays Billy Lawlor in Camelot Theatre's "42nd Street." He is surrounded clockwise by cast members Aubrey Campbell, Caitlin Rae Campbell, Julia Holden-Hunkins, Marlena Gray, Alexa Nienhaus, Shaundra Cook, Sarah Gore, Holly Nienhaus and McKinley Ropers.

Photo by Kayla Young

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December 07, 2012

By Angela Decker

for the Mail Tribune

Camelot Theatre's production of "42nd Street" is a champagne toast to Broadway and the people who make it happen. It is also a celebration of the American spirit that keeps on dancing in the face of "42nd Street," a musical that leaves audiences humming, was adapted as a stage production in 1980 by Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble from the 1933 Busby Berkeley film. It is set in the Great Depression and follows the creation of a Broadway musical from casting call to opening night.

Camelot Artistic Director Livia Genise directs an energetic and tireless cast of performers, and the play's lively and celebratory atmosphere quickly envelops the audience. On opening night, several theatergoers were tapping their toes along with the performers.

The plot is tried and true. Famed director Julian Marsh tries to mount a big musical at the height of the Depression, but one thing after another goes wrong. When the show's demanding diva breaks a leg, Marsh is ready to throw in the towel, but his plucky performers and assistants won't let him give up.

So he turns to inexperienced and stage-struck chorus girl Peggy Sawyer to save their jobs and the show.

Sarah Gore plays the newcomer with wide-eyed charm and a zippy pair of tapping feet. Surrounding her is a gifted ensemble that includes Galen Schloming as young tenor and love interest Billy Lawlor, Tyler Ward as the sometimes nurturing, sometimes manipulative director Julian Marsh, Linda Otto is the demanding but vulnerable diva and Rebecca K Campbell plays maternal songwriter and performer Maggie Jones.

Campbell also is choreographer for the show, with assistance from Renée Hewitt and Schloming. In "42nd Street," dancing is a huge part of the appeal. Although with 23 performers the cast is relatively large for a Camelot production, it's naturally smaller than the cast of a Broadway show or a big film.

Yet everything is big about the dance numbers here: big kicks, big smiles and super synchronized tapping. The dancing is spot-on, and the performers are dynamos.

In the final scenes there's a 20-minute dance number that leaves even the audience breathless. Campbell has a vibrant voice and she's a delight, belting out tunes with earthy force.

Musical director Michael Wing produces standout musical numbers such as "Go Into Your Dance," "We're in the Money," "Shuffle Off to Buffalo" and "Lullaby of Broadway." The set design is spare, but ideally so, leaving plenty of room for the dancers to strut their stuff, and incorporates a clever shadow screen that amplifies laughs during one of

The show also evokes the "hip-hooray and bally-hoo" of Broadway with its terrific costumes. Costume designers Barbara Raines and Breena Cope evoke the 1930's era, but with a dreamy, glittery quality that's perfect for a musical extravaganza.

"42nd Street" runs through Sunday, Dec. 30, at Camelot Theatre, 101 Talent Ave., Talent. Curtain is at 8 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets cost \$25; \$23 for students and seniors.

Angela Decker is a freelance writer in Ashland and can be reached at decker4@gmail.com.

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