

“BEETLEJUICE: Strange, Unusual, and a Show Worth Seeing”

By: Xan Blount

On Tuesday, December 19, 2023, I found myself greeted by the living, the dead, and everything in between as I sat to see the touring production BEETLEJUICE. Stop by the Kravis Center until December 24, 2023, and jump in the line, not to congo, but to buy your ticket to come see the touring production of BEETLEJUICE.

Based on the Geffen Company Picture of the same name, BEETLEJUICE follows the story of a demon sharing the same name who just wants to be seen, needing his name to be said three times to allow this to happen. Teaming up with recently deceased Barbara and Adam Maitland, whose house is now being moved into, the three work together with grieving teenager Lydia Deets to scare Charles Deets, her father, and Delia, Lydia’s life coach and Charles’ new partner, out of their new house. Lydia has just lost her mother and is willing to do anything for the chance to talk to her again. With plenty of ups and downs, taking you all the way down to the Netherworld, this show will have you laughing and crying.

Beetlejuice, the namesake for the whole production, played by Justin Collette had me and the rest of the audience laughing the entire night. With an impressive vocal range shown through his vocal performances, such as “The Whole ‘Being Dead’ Thing”, Collette also had an iconic scary voice complete with a perfectly curated horror scream. Collette had exquisite comedic timing and his involvement with the audience kept me engaged the entire time. Breaking the fourth wall in a show often gets confusing, however, it made perfect sense coming from Collette’s Beetlejuice, as he made jokes that served right to our audience. Lydia, played by Isabella Esler, also impressed me with her vocal range. With what sounded like an effortless and healthy belt, Esler did not hold back in her moments to shine in songs such as “Dead Mom” and “Home”.

Barbara and Adam Maitland, played by Megan McGinnis and Will Burton respectively, had strong chemistry with one another. McGinnis and Burton had beautiful harmonies in their duet, “Ready Set, Not Yet”, and made strong choices when showing their discomfort with both death and Beetlejuice. The growth of these characters even after their death was shown as they behaved very motherly and fatherly towards Lydia, and made bold choices later showing their new versions of themselves following “Barbara 2.0”. Charles, played by Jesse Sharp, and Delia, played by Sarah Litzsinger, had a humorous relationship that always added an extra layer of drama and tension to any scene they were in, as the two fought to keep their hands off one another despite their passion.

One of the most impressive elements of this show was the scenic design, designed by David Korins. Each scene had a distinct set, clearly separating the living room from the roof. In

collaboration with the lighting, designed by Kenneth Posner, transitions between the world of the living and the world of the dead could be easily seen, with the Netherworld often having brighter and more chaotic colors. When any demon used possession in the show, lighting and placement of the actors, directed by Alex Timbers, allowed for the audience to understand who was in control of who in the scene, also adding another layer to the already hilarious moments. The use of props, specifically the giant sandworm puppet designed by Michael Curry, continued to shock me as the show progressed. Despite outstanding sets, lighting, and props, these never upstaged the actors and the technical and performance elements worked together in strong harmony.

The musical was impressive, and as someone completely blind to what I was getting myself into, I left the show laughing my head off. For a work that talked so much about death, you never found yourself focusing on the true gruesome nature of what was happening. Although there was some confusion I came across towards the end of the show, such as knowing whether or not Adam and Barbra came back to life in the end, I was able to follow along a rather confusing story for the majority of the show. The orchestra was amazing and had a strong sound, however, at times I could not hear the actors on stage, despite noting that they were already belting and projecting. There were also times when I missed the words that were being sung, however, the acting choices helped me understand what was happening.

There is “No Reason” to not spend a night laughing and reminding yourself how precious life truly is for everyone. Stop by the Kravis Center until December 24, 2023, to see a show that will have you saying to all of your friends *Bettlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetle...*

More information on the show and how to buy tickets can be found on the Kravis Center website or at the following link, kravis.org. Tickets can also be purchased by calling the Box Office at the following number 561.832.7469.