

CHICAGO IS READY TO RAZZLE DAZZLE YOU

-by Malika Mckeith-Wellington

Prepare to be transported to the Jazz Age when watching CHICAGO: The Musical by Bob Fosse, Fred Eb, and John Kander as this satirical show beckons its audience to a fascinating world of crime, corruption, and cabaret. This iconic revival of the roaring 20s is transporting the Kravis Center to CHICAGO's infamous Cook County Jail from November 7, 2023, to November 12, 2023. This show without fail lit the stage with an electric performance, timeless jazz score, and sharp choreography. As the orchestra strikes up the first note the unmistakable aura of dark humor elopes the theater promising a night of vice and vengeance.

CHICAGO tells the story of Velma Kelly and Roxie Hart competing for the spotlight amid scandalous murder trials. Central to any interpretation of CHICAGO is its leading actors, yet the orchestra and ensemble equally proved to be pillars of strength to the production. The cast, both in major and minor roles, displayed significant commitment by remaining present on the sidelines of the stage, deeply engaged throughout the performance as blocked by their director. The conductor, Ralph Burns, and the orchestra were intentionally visible, not concealed in the pit, allowing the audience to fully immerse themselves in the iconic music.

The direction by Walter Bobbie and choreography in this production encapsulate the art of storytelling through movement. Ann Reinking's choreography in the style of Bob Fosse, powerfully aligns with the music, highlighting every note and thereby intensifying the connection between music and movement. Attending the performance guarantees an experience marked by iconic Fosse signatures, such as his famous shoulder rolls and dynamic thrusts of the hip. However, it is unfortunate as some of the choreography was lost due to a lack of lighting on select dancers, diminishing the overall impact of their performances.

The leads did a phenomenal job and the casting for each role grew on me the more the show developed. Kailin Brown (Velma Kelly) was a performer accused of murdering her husband and sister. Kailin from the beginning to the end of the show constantly entertained and embodied their role to the fullest, especially through their dance and song. Katie Frieden brings sass and amusing character to Roxie, a wife who murdered her lover. Katie Frieden considered every line and song, adding her unique interpretation of the character with skill. These characters did a great job keeping the audience engaged by breaking the fourth wall making remarkable jokes and commentary towards the audience.

At a pivotal moment in CHICAGO, "The Press Conference Rag" was performed by Connor Sullivan who plays Billy Flynn. This standout number expresses the musical's sharp social commentary, adding a layer of wit and depth. Roxie imitates a puppet as Billy Flynn is directing her. With Flynn's hands strategically placed on Roxie's back and Roxie sitting in his lap, the choreography symbolizes control by Flynn the "puppeteer".

The simplicity in the set design crafted by Scenic Designer John Lee Beatty directs the audience's attention toward the essential plot and its ideas, limiting their props and scenery by incorporating black chairs and select props such as notebooks and pom-poms. Within this setting, subtle details emerge, enriching the characters an

example of this would be the inclusion of red nails which stand out among the character's black attire, featuring dresses, lingerie, suits, and leotards even from a far distance. The addition of the red nails introduces a layer of symbolism, potentially suggesting the concept of being caught "red-handed" and suggesting a symbolic connection to the character's involvement in acts of violence.

Don't miss the CHICAGO: The Musical at the Kravis Center! Step into the captivating world of crime, corruption, and cabaret in the iconic Jazz Age. With sensational performances, a timeless jazz score, and sharp choreography. Join us for a mesmerizing experience that will transport you to the heart of Chicago's infamous Cook County Jail. Secure your tickets now at www.kravis.org for a night of entertainment that promises to be "All That Jazz"!