

BEETLEJUICE is a scary good time!

By: Kailyn Pinder

Based on the 1988 film by Tim Burton, BEETLEJUICE the Musical features larger-than-life sets, powerful vocals, and some rude humor that you would only expect from a demon straight out of the Netherworld. BEETLEJUICE is now playing at the Kravis Center from December 19-24, 2023. I personally really enjoyed watching this musical. It has a good balance of humor and sentiment for “a show about death” which inevitably will bring up heavy subjects.

BEETLEJUICE follows a young girl named Lydia Deetz who has recently lost her mother. Her whole life changes when she moves into a new house and meets a recently deceased couple: Barbra and Adam, and Beetlejuice: a demon from the Netherworld. She tries to team up with the ghosts to scare her father out of the house to keep her life the same as it was, but that plan ends up backfiring. In desperation, she decides to say “Beetlejuice” three times to work with him to try to get her mom back. Lydia soon finds out that Beetlejuice is exactly the horror they were afraid he would be. Will Lydia be able to get her mom back? Or will she be stuck in the life she is living forever?

Justin Collette (Beetlejuice) enchanted the audience with his opening night. As an actor who has spent many years performing improv at major comedy festivals, you could really see his comedic talents in this show. The character Beetlejuice has a very distinctive voice and Collette used this tone to enhance his character throughout the show. Whether it was raising his tone to poke fun at another character, or singing with the gravel in his voice that you would hope for, Collette did a very good job portraying the role of Beetlejuice. I was in awe of Isabella Esler’s performance as Lydia. As a recent high school graduate, making her professional debut, Esler’s portrayal demonstrated the ease of a seasoned professional. Her solo “Dead Mom” in Act One and “Home” in Act Two really show the emotional aspects of Lydia mourning her mother’s death. Esler’s balance of power and emotion brought tears to my eyes. The only issue was that the actors were sometimes difficult to understand because they were overpowered by the orchestra. This may also be due to the fact that I saw the cast on the opening night of the tour so they could still be figuring out the sound in a new theater.

The props and special effects were also something that caught my eye. When Beetlejuice is summoned and takes over the house, all the decor is completely changed from the original modern, contemporary style. It is covered in black and white stripes, the couch has claws, and there are horns coming out of the ceiling. There is a very visual switch when Beetlejuice is in control. As the power is switching into Beetlejuice’s hands, a huge animatronic is on stage, swatting the people away with its giant hands controlled by two ensemble members. Other minor special effects are used throughout the show: such as a piece of paper that disappears into flames and strobe effects that are used in various parts of the show.

While I thoroughly enjoyed this show, I wouldn't recommend it to all audiences. There is definitely some mature language and suggestive gestures that wouldn't be appropriate for young children. The show also included flashing lights, smoke effects, and loud noises that may upset some people. Besides that, you won't be able to stop saying "Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice, Beetlejuice" after watching this amazing performance at the Kravis Center. For more ticket information visit the Kravis Center website at <https://www.kravis.org/> or call the box office at 561-832-7469.