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*Chicago*: Amateur Cast Dominates a Popular Musical

When I entered the theatre, I was overcome by a sense of liveliness. People were already in their seats thirty minutes before the play started, cast members were in character chatting with some of the audience members, and the band was tuning their instruments on stage. From the beginning of the play, I could tell the play was going to be presentational because Ensemble Male 1 (Zachary Fortune) walked onto the stage and talked directly to the audience. I think that the play was well done, but I think that the main characters were really the only ones who kept the energy up and held the whole play together. I was able to suspend my disbelief because the actors and actresses portrayed the characters well in the context of the play’s setting.

The actress that stood out to me the most was Isabelle O’Keefe who played Roxie. Her acting, singing, and dancing were equally strong, which is why her character caught my eye. She was able to project her voice without lowering the quality of her diction and pronunciation. From the way she walked, to her slight accent, to her facial expressions, O’Keefe completely embodied the character she was playing. All three aspects of a triple threat (acting, singing, and dancing) were tested in her solo “Roxie,” but O’Keefe took on all three almost effortlessly. She was able to perform the choreography well without letting it impact the quality of her voice. I thought that she outdanced the other three ensemble members during her number because she added her character’s personality to the dance. She also used her props in a way that enhanced her acting; it looked natural rather than forced. I think that O’Keefe delivered the sassiness and personality of Roxie without overexaggerating it to the point where it would get cringey. O’Keefe kept the energy level up and never slipped out of character during the musical number and was able to suspend my disbelief the entire time.

The musical number “All That Jazz,” was the best showcase of the ensemble’s skills in *Chicago.* Because it was the first musical number, it set the stage for the rest of the play. I thought that the choreography was performed well, which was shown in the parts when they were close together in a tight group. Only one small mistake could throw off the whole dynamic; however, the ensemble was in synchronization and on time with their choreography. They each conveyed their emotions well, which was shown when they faced the camera. I thought the number screamed jazz with just the right amount of sultry expression.

I think that this musical suited Longwood University’s Theatre Department. I thought that the Director cast the parts well. Although the actors flew across the stage for the first half, I could tell the length of the play took a toll on the actors in the second half. The delivery of their lines was clear but not as intense in the second half. Overall, I would describe the play as entertaining and complex.

P.S. Caleb Bright who played Mary Sunshine was revealed to be a man instead of a woman when Jack Harmon who played Billy ripped off Bright’s wig.