

THEATER NOTES, by Sidney B. Simon

Another Miracle Down In Naples

Theatrezone, that small, blackbox theater at the Community School in Naples, is a miracle. If you ever doubted that someone could pull off a mammoth Broadway musical and work it into a postage stamp-sized stage, go see EVITA as staged miraculously by Mark Danni at Theatrezone.

The production is absolutely flawless. For starters, Danni uses eight Equity performers. What a difference, professionalism makes. Then, to play Evita, he brings in Andrea McArdle. Yes, the original “Annie,” who does Evita with the same belting energy she had as a kid. She commands the stage with her brilliance.

Then, he brings back to Naples, Jason Kraack, who played Freddy in their smash production of CHESS last season, to do a perfect characterization of Che Guevara. Kraack has a singing voice that was completely captivating, and one to make Antonio Banderas envious.

There is an ensemble that makes up the chorus, the dancers, and who do a slew of bit parts. Not a single one of them fails to make the production swing. Sometimes, in a few of the big numbers, “Oh, What a Circus,” and “Rainbow Tour,” for example, you can’t believe there are only 10 voices bringing down the rafters. My hat’s off to each and every one in the cast. There are three young candle holders who sing a worship to Evita. They are adorable and sing it beautifully: Caroline Allen, Julia Elleman, and Rachel Pence.

Most of you know the story. Evita’s rise on the backs of various men, to become Peron’s wife. And her manipulating, wheeling and dealing, and getting what she wanted. There is a marvelous seven piece orchestra that illuminates every song she sings, and they set up a lively beat for every dance danced. The choreography on that tiny stage is another miracle, thanks to Karen Molnar, who is also a Member of Equity. Molnar knows exactly what she’s doing.

Evita at Theatrezone was clearly one of the finest shows I have seen all season. I urge you to get on the phone immediately. There is only one weekend left. It may already be all sold out. But call and plan to go. You will never regret it, nor did the Standing Ovation Audience that just wouldn’t let that sterling cast get off that stage at the end of the performance.

Theatrezone is a miracle and a treasure in our midst. The box office number is: 239-449-2323. Final performance dates are: March 5-8 at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, March 9 at 2 P.M. Don’t delay. Call now. Or else, you’ll have to wait for their next smash hit, HAIR, June 12-22.