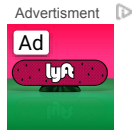


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# BWW Review: East West's Stunningly Rousing LA CAGE AUX FOLLES Does Fierstein & Herman Proud!

by Gil Kaan May. 20, 2016



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**LA CAGE AUX FOLLES**/book by Harvey Fierstein/lyrics & music by Jerry Herman/directed by Tim Dang/**David Henry Hwang** Theater at the Union Center for the Arts/June 26, 2016

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE Love Story to Star Married Deaf Actors Troy Kotsur and Deanne Bray

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The East West Players' latest production, **LA CAGE AUX FOLLES**, most successfully communicates the heart and humor of Tony Award-winners Harvey Fierstein (for Book in 1984) and Jerry Herman (for Lyrics & Music in 1984), injecting an Asian flavor as only East West can do. Still set in St. Tropez, France; the La Cage Aux Folles nightclub's now predominately decorated in Chinese reds and golds, with dragons, kimonos, tassels and mandarin hats tossed in.



East West's outgoing Producing Artistic Director Tim Dang deftly directs his very talented cast at a neck-breaking pace allowing just enough time for the laughter to subside and the heartstrings to stop tugging.

Georges has successfully run La Cage for years with his love Albin as the club's star attraction. Jean-Michel, the result of Georges' hetero night of passion with gorgeous showgirl Sylvia twenty-something years ago, returns home to announce his intentions to marry Anne, the daughter of an extremely moral, extremely-to-the-right politician. High jinks ensue as Georges and Albin's home gets 'de-gayed' by Jean-Michael for Anne's parents' visit.

Jon Jon Briones charismatically commands the stage as Georges introducing his Cagelles and his star. Briones' ever so romantic as his Georges sings "Song on the Sand," then ever so poignant in "Look Over There." Sigh!

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Audrey Cain & Jinwoo Jung  
Photo by Michael Lamont

second act; Watanabe, most naturalistic in Albin's "most challenging acting role as Jean-Michael's mother," weaves a most loving narrative in "The Best of Times." Eyes get moist!

The unsympathetically-written character of Jean-Michel receives lots of good feels from Jinwoo Jung's performance. His rendition of "With Anne on My arm" easily illustrates the romanticism and young innocent love between Jung's Jean-Michel and Audrey Cain's Anne. Displaying a warm chemistry, Jung and Cain dance a lovely pas de deux. Very nice! Jung brings tears as his Jean-Michel eventually apologizes with "Look Over There (reprise)."

Allen Lucky Weaver kills as Jacob, Albin's "I want to be on stage" maid/butler. His comic timing of his witty barbs consistently steals the scenes from his talented cohorts.

Pre-show, Weaver (buxomly-padded as Jacobina) strongly warbles "This Girl is On Fire" and "Vogue" with more than able support from her two gold Speedo-clad go-go hunks Cesar Cipriano and Reuben Uy. All too fun!!!

Grace Yoo takes full opportunity as the opportunistic restaurant owner Jacqueline to vamp and impress.

Michael Hagiwara and Sharline Liu deliver full dimension to their portrayals of the

As Georges' love Albi  
owns and *nails* "I Am What I Am

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Cesar Cipriano, Allen Lucky Weaver & Reuben Uy  
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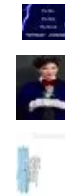


Gedde Watanabe, Sharline Liu, Michael Hagiwara,  
Jon Jon Briones, Jinwoo Jung & Audrey Cain  
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Dindons, the anti-homosexual parents of Jean-Michel's intended. Hagiwara milks his

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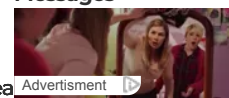
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unwelcomed moment in the nightclub spotlight with comic aplomb, while Liu's submissive wife Madame Dindon surprises all bursting out with her unexpected operatic pipes.

Choreographer Reggie Lee outdoes himself in his very fun, very sexy, very clever choreography for the Cagelles, as well as, for everyone else in the cast. In the title song, Lee has the Cagelles high-kicking, flipping, and splitting almost flat on the stagefloor. As the fun-loving, yet "The show must go on" professional Cagelles; Christopher Aguilar, Carlos Chang, Jonathan Kim, DT Matias, and Alex Sanchez dexterously handle all Lee's steps, including some sharp tapping and showgirl strutting. In the midst of all this wonderful choreographic frivolity, Cipriano and Chang execute a very serious, very beautiful pas de deux. Woa!

Three stand-out *HYS*-terical moments: When the characters go to Georges and Albin's living room, the Cagelles transform into live still-life mannequins that the characters act somewhat inappropriately with. Brilliant! Then, during Georges' lessons in butchering up Albin in "Masculinity," Watanabe serves up comedy gold! As the Dindon's try to figure out the erotic artwork on the hors d-oeuvres plates they're handed, the go-go studs Cipriano and Uy act out the various 'wrestling' poses and then, playfully and suggestively leapfrog across the stage mirroring the drawings on the plates. So hilariously inspired!

**Victoria Petrovich** high-sparkly nightclub set ingeniously utilizes the go-go boys and the Cagelles in some scene changes pulling a movable platform onto centerstage like slaves pulling a barge. Anthony Tran's striking and colorful costumes appropriately run the gambit from Asian showgirl to conservative matron to Madonna coned one-pieces.

Kudos to musical director Marc Macalintal for providing the sturdy musical backbone to **LA CAGE AUX FOLLES** conducting Richie Gonzaga on trumpet, Robert Todd on trombone, Adrienne Geffen on clarinet, Victor Vedoy on sax and Michael "Weeble" Boerum on percussion.

What a perfect capper for the East West Players' 50th Anniversary Season, as well as, a fitting bookend to Dang's tenure heading East West.

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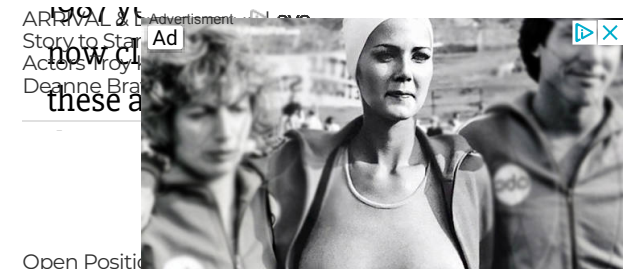
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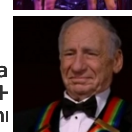


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