

# Minnesota Theater Love

Because we LOVE Theater

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Sunday, April 10, 2016

## The Fantasticks - Nautilus Music-Theater



Nautilus Music-Theater is best known in the Twin Cities for developing new musical theater and opera works, but from time to time, they grace us with a production of an often-produced show, as with their 1997 *Into the Woods*, 2006 *Man of La Mancha*, and 2007 *Carousel*. When we first heard that the company would be taking on *The Fantasticks* this season, it was surprising. It's never been a favorite show, but if anyone could breathe new life into this old chestnut, it would be Nautilus.

And of course, they do. The unconventional casting is just the starting point of this production, staged by artistic director Ben Krywosz (see photo below). The young lovers of the story are

played by veteran performers and real-life married couple Gary Briggie and Wendy Lehr. Although they play the roles as written (Luisa is just sixteen, and Matt is just over twenty), the actors' maturity lends poignancy to their youthful dreams and fancies. Briggie and Lehr are sweetly convincing both in their tender moments and their childish disagreements.

The lovers are helped and hindered in their romance by their fathers, next-door neighbors and friends who scheme to achieve their desired outcome to the romance, with mixed



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results. Luisa's father is played by Christina Baldwin as a taciturn tightwad in farmer's overalls and a dour expression. Matt's father is a bit more animated, but still serious, as played by Jennifer Baldwin Peden. Seeing the Baldwin sisters on stage together is always a treat, and hearing them sing together is heavenly!

William Gilness plays the mysterious narrator El Gallo in much more conventional casting, but he shows us that he sees the lovers as young and foolish, and brings a worldly weariness as well as his lovely voice to the role. Brian Sostek rounds out the cast as The Actor Who Dies, which combines three roles from the original script in one. Of course Sostek is more than equal to the task, particularly when it comes to dying with great enthusiasm and style. He also choreographed the show's abduction sequence, which is amazingly ambitious for the small playing space.



Gary Briggie and Wendy Lehr - always young lovers.

The show is snuggled into Nautilus's intimate space in Lowertown's Northern Warehouse. The square stage is surrounded by risers on three sides, one of which holds a loft for music director Jerry Rubino and his piano and Andrea Stern and her harp, who accompany the proceedings beautifully. Sets and costumes by Victoria Petrovich provide simple trappings that let the story and the music shine. And Mike Wangen's lighting, as usual, sets appropriate moods throughout. (Carly says—and I agree—that Wangen could light a Wal-Mart and make it look beautiful.)

There is no reason not to see this show. Unless you can't get tickets, which are selling fast. Get yours now to experience

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We can't take credit for this brilliant repurposing of the Ivey Awards' promotional photo of Ben Krywosz that appeared around Give to the Max Day 2015. We also can't resist sharing it.

Posted by Jules



Labels: Nautilus Music-Theater, Raves, Reviews

this deeply moving production. The house only seats about 45 people, so you will be among a select few who will be able to say in years to come that they saw the best Fantasticks anyone could imagine.

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**Circus Juventas**

@CircusJuventas

Tickets to this summer's high-flying tale are available now at [ticketworks.com](http://ticketworks.com)! Embark with Circus Juventas to STEAM, a retro-futuristic trip into the brilliant minds of the fathers of sci-fi via airship, time machine, & more! Don't miss this steampunk fantasy adventure.



Jun 25, 2018

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**Rob Callahan**

@robcallahan

To recap: Last night Minneapolis cops shot an unarmed black man in the back. 90 minutes ago Minneapolis cops marched in the pride parade. 60 minutes ago black

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Occasionally, we get free tickets for shows, which is awesome, cough:

(mntheaterlove@gmail.com).

Most of the time we buy tickets or season subscriptions. We write out of love and support of theater.