

Stage And Cinema
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SHINE ... (OUR APOLOGIES FOR PUTTING IT THIS WAY) ... SHINES

If you think about it, burlesques and musicals have a lot in common. They are both flashy, and both depend on good choreography. Characters have to be larger than life. Performers have to expose a lot of themselves. Audiences have high expectations, and an excellent performance of either is hard to come by. SHINE: A Burlesque Musical succeeds on both accounts.

plot is a variation of the classic “show about show business” story. Shine Mionne, owner of The Aristocrat (a steamy, seedy seat of downtown performance), has to choose between closing her theatre’s doors or working with a producer, Richard Suit. As promised, Suit finds an audience for Mionne’s show, but it comes at a cost—cleaning up the content and catering to the neighborhood’s gentrifying taste. Mionne struggles to preserve the character of The Aristocrat and the family she has created within it, while Suit’s attempts to tone down the show only amplify the chaos of opening night.

Woods and Cass King (of “The Wet Spots” fame) have written a show that is thoughtful, sultry, and hilarious—no surprise from the artists responsible for cabaret tunes such as “Bi-Curious George” and “Do You Take It (In The Ass?)”. The songs in SHINE are witty and catchy, and would stand on their own even if beautiful people were not removing their clothes to the rhythms. Any working artist will appreciate the bluesy “Day Job,” while “Doing the Nasty” is a welcome change of pace from the stereotypical love ballad.

The ensemble as a whole shines in this performance, creating a troupe of misfits and outcasts who call The Aristocrat home. Gemma Isaac (as Grace) has refined the bookish sensibilities of her grad student character to a titillating art form, and Adra Boo Green (as Lulu Von Doozy) could rival any femme fatale of stage or screen. Richard Suit, as portrayed by Douglas Crawford, is one of the most sympathetic producers I have seen.

Director and set designer Roger Benington keeps the action moving along, staged in a sparse circle of footlights. The closing number would benefit from a slightly faster tempo, but in general the pacing and rhythms of the show are spot on. Inga Ingenue’s choreography keeps the tassels twirling, and Danial Webster’s costume designs deserve particular note (especially the lewd puppet-like full-body faces)!

Like any talented burlesque performer, SHINE is simultaneously smart and sexy. The show expertly balances between sincerity and campy send-up, striking notes of nostalgia for vanishing venues while humorously highlighting the missteps that we make when trying to preserve the things we love. If you enjoy burlesque, or musicals, or sophisticated sex comedy, you should get your tickets right away. This is a Fringe show that deserves to sell out.

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<http://www.stageandcinema.com/2010/08/18/shine-nyc-fringe/>