

New York City 2010 Production

Time Out New York
August 28, 2010
By AndrewAndrew

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

(Transcribed from the video review)

Part 1 – First Intermission

Andrew: We're not going to lie to you. We knew this was going to happen sooner or later.

Andrew: We forgot to do the intro for this show.

Andrew: It's not that we forgot, it's that time got away from us.

Andrew: Tight schedule today. Thank god the show has an intermission.

Andrew: Hello? That's the magic of theater.

Andrew: We're at the intermission of SHINE. Um, I had really high... it's been getting great buzz early on. And then it got to the point where I had backlash. Like – it's not going to be that good. But...

Andrew: It is actually pretty good. Say the name again.

Andrew: SHINE.

Andrew: I actually know it had been getting good buzz, but something about the way it was marketed turned me off. It looked too slick and glossy. And what's interesting is the show itself is about marketing, and making something slick and glossy that shouldn't be too slick and glossy. It's kind of like The Muppet Show if The Muppet Show was at the Box Theater.

Andrew: What's crazy is that it's as downtown as you can be without being uptown, and it's as uptown as you can be without being too downtown.

Andrew: And of course that's the message or the story of the show is about walking that fine line between off-off-off and on-on-on.

Andrew: But we do have a second act, so it could change. Who knows?

Andrew That's a good cliffhanger. We need to create tension somehow.

Andrew. I'm on the fence about it.

Part 2 – Post Show

Andrew: Fantastic.

Andrew: Hands-down more goose bumps per minute than any other show. I almost cried. Like, multiple times. I mean, I was really moved.

Andrew: Not only did I forget I was at a Fringe show, I forgot I was at a show. I was really transported. It's story, it's music, it's dance, it's burlesque, it's dreams it's RENT for our generation.

Andrew: Wow. That's hefty.

Andrew: Don't you agree?

Andrew: It's very RENT-like. I remember thinking early on it was somewhat RENT-derivative. But those derivatives are paying high dividends in the form of fabulousness.

Andrew: It's funny, it's entertaining, it's great.

Andrew: I can't recommend it enough. If it doesn't go on to a longer run somewhere else, there is no god.

Andrew: Now granted, I think we saw some of the performers in Portland or Seattle a year ago. So look 'em up. Keep track of them.

Andrew: There have been a couple of burlesque-inspired or burlesque-themed shows that we've seen. It's definitely a form that's been making a comeback over the past few years. The thing about SHINE is that all of the numbers are in service of the plot. It's not a collection of shows that come together. It's a full thought, with a narrative. The music is incredible. The music is definitely Broadway caliber.

Andrew: Hands-down great show. We thoroughly enjoyed SHINE.

Andrew: It shines.

Andrew. It shined through.

Andrew: Its... its... its shiny.

Andrew: Okay. Over and out.

Original video at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P0jcYyljcl>

NYC Fringe Guide
August 24, 2010

SHINE: A Fringe 2010 Must-See

The first show to earn a “must-see” designation from our staff this year. What SHINE lacks in dramaturgy and originality it more than makes up for with rip-roaring hilarity. The cast is superb, the performances tight, the music is bumping and the hips grinding, albeit with a lot more nod-nod wink-wink than actual erotic heat. Any who appreciate the Rocky Horror brand of bawdy irreverence will welcome this brazen production with open arms, hearts, and legs.

Original article at:

<http://nycfringeguide.com/shine-a-burlesque-musical/>

Theater Is Easy
August 15, 2010
By Janelle Lannan

A Fringe Festival Best Bet

BOTTOM LINE: If you enjoy sophisticated theatre but are a sucker for cheap humor delivered with Vaudeville precision (not to mention Burlesque Burlesque Burlesque!!), you do NOT want to miss Shine: A Burlesque Musical.

I had not prepared myself much with research on this piece before going, figuring that the Fringe has a wide range of good and bad to see and I'm a gambler. But on opening night I hit the big time as a big winner with Shine: A Burlesque Musical.

Simple and quick summary: Shine (the character, played by Cass King) owns a relic of a theatre that has been around since the 1800s and has hosted a wide range of famous performers and artists. However, it's present day and she's a soaking-in-alcohol alcoholic who can't afford the place or to pay her performers who are also her family. In walks money to help "produce" the show that's gonna save the theatre and through a continuous battle for control of the rehearsal process, everything falls apart right up to opening night. Yeah, that about covers it without giving too much away - because I do NOT want to give too much away. Why would I rob you of the joy and fun of this brilliantly cheeky show with tons of merit?

Shine has classic cheap and bad jokes, each told totally without apology and cracked at you like a whip you should have been expecting. The writing is clearly from a smart team who loves burlesque and the simple things in theatre that have held audiences hearts since the inception of Vaudeville. Even though there are some transitional problems, I couldn't help but forgive every one as I was sitting on the edge of my seat to just see what turned up next.

The show is brilliant: brilliant performances, amazingly classy dancing (as well as bawdy as hell while tasteful enough for a theatre audience), badass vocal performances and all around stellar and crisp acting. It has unmeasured potential and for my money it could easily be on Broadway in the near future. Sure, there are those issues that all new shows have, but they are small and easily fixable. The show currently stands on excellent ground and the Fringe is a perfect way to feature this production. I, myself, am crossing my fingers that it gets seen by as many people as possible and is picked up as a Fringe favorite. Who knows, maybe the right money will walk in and I'll get to say I saw it back when.

Go see it. Just do. If you can stand a little flesh and a lot of great presence. You'll thank me.
Original article at:

<http://www.theasy.com/Reviews/FringeFestival/shineaburlesquemusical.php>

Stagebuzz
August 29, 2010
By Rebecca N. Robertson

Review: Shine: A Burlesque Musical

I am relieved to report that Shine is not a homogenized musical 'about' burlesque and, unlike what appears to be a modern trend, it is certainly not a strip show excusing its lack of skill by calling itself 'burlesque'. Internationally touring music duo The Wet Spots have spawned a genuinely bawdy musical that triumphantly succeeds in hailing free expression of sexuality and embracing of individuality, while dazzling the audience with the talent of its artists.

The premise of the show is The Aristocrat, a fictional burlesque house circa 1930's that is struggling to make the rent in NYC's rapidly gentrifying Bowery district between the Whole Foods Market and a Starbucks. Enter Richard Suit (Douglas Crawford) to save the historic hall and its burlesque show, but at the expense of its soul, imposing sterile mainstream sexual ideals on the untraditional cast of characters.

Adopting the structure of a great backstage musical, Shine's song and dance numbers are willfully entertaining, furthering the action with clever lyrics and illustrating the finer points of the dialogue with upbeat mischief. The original music explores various genres from rock to cabaret vaudeville, while remaining cohesive in style, offering singable melodies and toe-tapping grooves. Highlighting the youthful limberness of the chorus, the choreography keeps energy high and supports the folly of the club atmosphere, especially effective in the plot background number "Perversions of Yesteryear". In a such song heavy production, a few of the numbers that seem to exist for the sake illustrating argument, such as "Girls Gone Wild" and "Breezy Broadway Love Song" may be unnecessarily long, thanks to straightforward presentation that quickly drives the ideas home.

The ladies of Shine dominate the stage. As theatre owner Shine Mionne, Cass King's self-empowered stage presence leads this fast paced exhibition of campy humor, catchy songs and passionate ideals. New to burlesque Adra Boo Green portrays The Aristocrat's unconventional leading lady Lulu Von Doozy with growing confidence in numbers like "Large and in Charge", winning hearts and much deserved audience exultation. Gemma Isaac exudes sexy innocence as the starry eyed ingenue, seducing us into following her as she discovers the landscape of this underground performance culture and her own developing desires. The ensemble is energetic eye-candy, though undermatured characterizations unfortunately weaken the dramatic effectiveness of the chorus numbers. Amid infrequent rough spots such as these, the show shines with higher production potential and begs to be seen, more, more!

There are few moments that fail to win empathy, such as a number devoted to a performer's complaints that he might have to "get a day job" to make ends meet while he pursues his dreams, but this is NYC, after all. However, the great majority of the idealistic message is intellectually convincing and presents the modern existence of burlesque as rebellious movement toward self-acceptance and a revival of consensual sexual exploration beyond exploitation of stereotype. Like great sex, comedy though titillation of intellect may be at the core of Shine, but it quite simply feels like fun!

Original article at:

<http://www.stagebuzz.com/2010/08/review-shine-burlesque-musical-new-york.html>

Stage And Cinema
August 18, 2010
by Kestryl Lowrey

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.

Original article at:

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

Nite Life Exchange
August 26, 2010
By Suzanne Peebles

SHINE at Fringe: A Burlesque Review of a Burlesque Musical

If the hope is that a Fringe show will one day be living and breathing on a Broadway stage, it is quite exciting to think that the "Great White Way" would then be offering up such juicy, audacious and still reverently based material that SHINE: A Burlesque Musical showed off in this year's New York Fringe Festival. This fantastic future cult-classic was thriving with a gritty and legitimate take on New York's nightlife history, complete with sass, smarts, scandal – and of course, skin. Though, as the NYU liberal arts student Grace notes, while undressing right into an "internship" with the failing, but historic Aristocrat Theater: "its not like strippers, its different."

The writers have clearly lived this world and use smart, clear and compelling choices in the telling Puppets of this world to the lay persons, who otherwise may be inexperienced with Burlesque. In the midst of respecting the genre perimeters of Musical Theatre, co-writers Cass King, John Woods & Sam Dulmage successfully shed light on how urban renewal can neglect and, in fact, snuff out the essence of a vibrant sub-culture. It is a delightful jab at neo burlesque and traditional values of performance colliding in the midst this New York doctrine of money and space. Also LuLu endearingly woven in, in a very "wave your freak flag" kind of way, is the diehard notion that "everyone wants to be a star." The writers have great instincts offering plenty of meat – and skin – to this brassy, bold and beautiful cast bustling its way into the mainstream, but clearly in their own way. No selling out here.

The cast is colorful and eclectic. Besides the gorgeous and consistently Dazzle energetic ensemble members woven throughout in sideshows and costume parades, there is a Freddy Mercury inspired Topeka, former geek looking for love and stardom, an insightful yet virginal NYU student blossoming in this world of misfits, a dazzling and sassy old-school diva named LuLu, a hardcore gentrification guru, Richard Suit, and of course, the blazingly and exceedingly effervescent (or passed out) leader of the pack, Shine Mionne - who is as visually striking as Cruella Deville. Though it didn't really bother me too much, there could be just a bit more character development if this is headed to a bigger stage. I found myself more mesmerized by the environment and how everyone fit and didn't fit within it, and was often uninterested in the romantic connections being made or the personal journeys of the characters. It didn't so much take away from my experience, but it is certainly a place for the show to grow. There was however, a TON of legitimacy in the casting choices, many of which displayed talents of clearly experienced Burlesque performers and vagabond entertainers.

The music, written by The Wet Spots (www.wetspotsmusic.com), was surprisingly Shinerefreshing in its quality. There were fun numbers like the almost Britney Spears parody "Girls Gone Wild" and one of my favorites "Dirty." And there were touching numbers, a highlight being when the Janitor (Co-Writer John Woods) simply sings a soothing lullaby amidst the commotion which taking over the old vaudeville house. Everything made sense musically and was rich enough to allow a deeply engrained wisdom of experience to balance out the hijinks and overriding festive air.

SHINE includes the best aspects of Burlesque: in your face realness, bawdy humor, unapologetic showmanship and Porcupinesome very inventive ways of undressing. It could not have been named more appropriately. With haunting and well-rounded music and a succinct and artful book, this richly costumed and vivacity driven show pulls off a unique blend of mayhem and reverence for the sometimes seemingly fading art of Burlesque. The cast tells quite effectively through inventive staging, no-holds-barred humor and ball-breaking belting, just what it means to

have this dream of simply being able to perform, to raise their voice and let their truth be heard – no matter what the method to that madness may be. The performers candidly move the story along, raising the level of awareness of merging a starry-eyed hopeful performer's life with the reality of everyday survival. The mission? To stay true to themselves and their art while foregoing compliance with the often dominating machine of gimmiks and finance. I'd buy a ticket to that anyday.

Original article at:

<http://cabaretexchange.com/review/theatre/1384-shine-at-fringe-a-burlesque-review-of-a-burlesque-musical.html>

The Wall Street Journal
August 27, 2010
By Pia Catton

One Last Weekend of Fun

After hundreds of performances, the New York International Fringe Festival winds to a close this weekend. But there's still time to catch some worthwhile productions. Here are a few that intrigued us this week. For more information go to www.fringenyc.org.

Shine: A Burlesque Musical

Building a narrative around burlesque pretty much demands that the story be set in a theater. And though this plot—about a struggling burlesque troupe that is saved by a deep-pocketed producer—isn't ground-breaking, the show is more entertaining than a lot of burlesque out there. Here, there are real characters. They break into song and dance numbers. And the one-liners are funny. Cass King, who plays theater owner and central performer Shine Mionne, melds all the feminine charms of a burlesque performer with the comedic panache of the (usually male) host.

Original article at:

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703959704575453572050838514.html>

Cultural Capitol
August 26, 2010
By J. D. Oxblood

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

Let's do the time warp again! And by "time warp" I mean warping to an alternate universe about six months from now when the Nouveau Burlesque, downtown New York's indigenous revival of the Great 20th Century American Burlesque, opens on The Great White Way. Now, this is an alternate universe, so it looks similar, but it is not identical to our own. In this alternate universe, some greats of our contemporary scene have different names and different histories: Jo Boobs is still the boss, but the alternate Boobs is still partying like it's 1979. The famous, gritty theater where it all goes down is either The Box or the Slipper Room crossed with the Minsky's National Winter Garden Theater, circa 1925, and the beautiful ingénue isn't a brainy, erudite Fordham grad, she's an NYU doctoral student writing a thesis on alternative gender performance, circa 1995.

Here's the dish: The Aristocrat Theater has to close. Shine On, the lovely MILF who inherited the joint from her tranny grandfather is a star artist but a terrible manager. She mortgaged the theater to pay her quirky, in-house troupe, and now some douchebag banker from Nantucket is going to repossess it. Richard Suit, wealthy hedge fund guy, swoops in like a guardian angel (or scheming devil?) with cash to produce their show. If they can sell enough tickets – and create enough buzz – their money worries are over forever and everyone lives happily ever after. But here's the catch: Dick Suit has the tastes of a dick in a suit. He wants teens in tartan skirts sucking on lollipops, and he most certainly doesn't want any fat, ill-featured, outcast, misfit, talentless charity cases in the show. And that's pretty much the whole troupe.

Dick Suit says their show is "Rent meets Stomp" – and I have to ask, is that a bad thing? If your goal is financial success you could do worse. Much worse. But here's the everlovin' rub: the goal for Shine and her bunch of plucky outcasts is nothing less than to keep it real. They believe in Burlesque as a revolutionary force, and that means tearing down gender distinctions, overthrowing sexual moralities of every order, sticking it to The Man by not paying your bills, and definitely – most definitely – NOT singing any cheesy Broadway love songs.

Long story short – Dick wants to fire the plus sized black woman, and he won't allow Shine to sing her signature Sally Bowles torch song, the charmingly sentimental "Whatever Happened to the Perversions of Yesteryear?" That is, until the plus sized black woman (Dick's word for her is "fat") sings an ethnically appropriate defense of ample women called "Large And In Charge." In the end Dick keeps all the nasty songs in the show, including "Doing the Nasty," which features some immortal and poetic lyrics like "I want to kiss your nipples with the tip of my dick." The show is a hit, the theater is saved, everyone gets paid no matter how ugly or talentless they are, and the curtain comes down on a catchy show-stopping tune, "Keep On Humpin' the Dream."

Despite the pretensions of the characters to amateurishness, the show is very professional: the lyrics are witty, and the music is catchy; the dance numbers are fun; the costumes are well made; and the acting is impeccable. There were some technical glitches – mics that didn't work, small gaps in the music – but that stuff is easy to resolve. My one complaint is that a show about burlesque should have more actual burlesque numbers, those two minute, self-contained shows with a theme, a reveal, a sly wink & nod, and two clever pasties. Shine is a rip-roarin' good time that takes us back to the dirty, funky, sexy place at the heart of the Nouveau Burlesque movement.

Of course, that heart only exists in an alternate universe. Think again about Dick's "Rent meets Stomp" comment. When I fell off the turnip truck on the corner of Avenue B and 10th street in the mid-90s, Life Cafe was already a museum. (Did I ever tell you about seeing my first burlesque show in '96? It was on Stanton between Ludlow and Orchard in an old, empty, tailor's warehouse. The highlight of the show was a completely naked woman in a pig mask throwing spaghetti noodles she had soaked in her own piss into the audience. Fortunately I was out of the line of fire.) There has been dirty, edgy, wrong entertainment happening in this city, probably since it became the biggest port in North America. But that stuff is only glorious in retrospect. At the time it's thrilling, scary, dangerous, and sublime, but the glory only happens when Memory is gilded with Time.

Dan Savage recently wrote a terrifyingly honest and awesome meditation on the growing world-wide phenom of Nouveau Burlesque (reviewed here by Cultural Capitol's own J. D. Oxblood), which pretty much sums up the "dirty nostalgia paradox" that threatens to sink burlesque just as its practitioners start to get paid. In short, burlesque, like all rights centered revolutionary movements, started in a place where having the courage to stand up in front of your critics was proof enough of your worth. But after you become a success and the revolution is over, after you made people recognize you for who you are (to use a related metaphor, after you came out of the closet), old-fashioned, nasty, judgmental human nature reasserts itself, and you don't get props anymore for simply getting up on stage. After the novelty has worn off, you have to give the audience what they want. So Shine, which wants to celebrate the mythical Downtown Burlesque Scene's freedom from artistic convention, whose main character burlesques (forgive the pun) your typical saccharine Broadway love song, ends up singing a typical, cheesy Broadway love song of uplift, as if we were jerked out of our alternate reality and dumped into a showing of Hair (or Rent).

The same goes for Shine On's number "Whatever Happened to the Perversions of Yesteryear?" She laments the passing of glory holes, hook ups in The Ramble, and dangerous public toilets. Sex is just no fun anymore, now that we can scratch every kinky itch on the internet, hold hands in public, and see our sexual idiosyncrasies portrayed on network TV. But isn't that what we were fighting for all along? Now that we have our freedom, is it boring us?

Shine is filled with little ironies like that, and the biggest irony of all will be if it actually makes it to Broadway. Its marquee will be the tombstone for "authentic" burlesque. Meh. Whatever. The downtown burlesque scene might die, but it will be replaced with something else more raunchy and satisfying. Meanwhile, I think it's about time Angie Pontani and Dirty Martini starred in a real, honest-to-goodness Broadway review, even if that means Nouveau Burlesque has grown up and learned to pay it's bills. 'Cause that's what happens after you've paid your dues.

Original article at:

<http://culturalcapitol.com/2010/08/26/shine-the-burlesque-musical/>

Backstage
August 15, 2010
By Marc Miller

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

Myriad are the pop-culture references in “Shine: A Burlesque Musical”: “Rocky Horror,” Mae West, Sally Rand, Dietrich, CBGB, the Pussycat Dolls, and the downtown burlesque movement of the past decade-plus. Plus it’s a backstage book musical with references to “42nd Street” and “Gold Diggers of 1933,” an innocent boy and girl caught up in the booty-shaking milieu, and more pasties and tassel-twirling than you’ve seen in years. How do you make so many influences hang together?

You don’t. “Shine” sprawls all over the place. But along the way are some genuinely funny filthy lines; a few excellent comedy songs (the prerecorded orchestra drowns out lyrics); an enthusiastic cast, with Cass King’s Tallulah-like burlesque mistress a standout; and some hilarious costumes. The clichés pile up, and the second act, dealing mostly with a big black diva receiving her due, feels like a detour. But enough of “Shine” works that you hope they’ll keep working on it.

Original article at

<http://www.backstage.com/bsa/reviews/shine-a-burlesque-musical-1004109411.story>

CurtainUp
August 16, 2010
By Paulanne Simmons

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

The Aristocrat Theater, the setting for this Burlesque Musical directed by Roger Benington, was born when The Wet Spots were living in Brooklyn and working at NYC burlesque venues. The idea was to create a theater where a bunch of dysfunctional artists could perform. Onto the scene strides Shine Mionne (Cass King), a hard-drinking, hard-living, hard-loving burlesque artist who keeps the troupe together with a song and a prayer. Just when she thinks the jig is up, Richard Suit (Douglas Crawford) offers to become her partner. But Suit wants to make changes that will seriously erode the glue that has kept the theater going despite adversity. The plot may be as old as the oldest profession. But the song and dance numbers sparkle. And there are enough raunchy jokes to keep an entire convent blushing. Even in the permissive 21st century, this is not one for the kids. So leave them at home and have fun. At La MaMa - Stewart. 2 hours with intermission.

Original article at

<http://www.curtainup.com/fringe10.html#Shine>

NYTheatre

August 13, 2010

By Ethan Angelica

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

Burlesque and musical theatre make for strange bedfellows. The first is a series of titillating acts that rely on the subtle art of the tease, while the other uses music and text to tell a story. Both are art forms I admire. Shine: A Burlesque Musical, appearing this year at FringeNYC, is making a valiant effort to combine the two, in what seems a genius idea that is sure to attract crowds. It's a raunchy, sexy concept, certainly not for the faint of heart (so leave the kids at home). And while it's getting close, the show suffers from a lack of story strength and seductive tease, which makes it neither a solid musical, nor a solid burlesque show.

The story centers on Shine Mionne (played by the brash, bawdy, and utterly endearing Cass King, who is also credited as one of the writers) and the Aristocrat, a theatre she inherited from her grandfather. She and her crew, a bunch of downtown burlesque artists, are threatened with foreclosure on their space if they don't pay their mortgage. Enter Richard Suit (performed to a tee by the crooning Douglas Crawford), who comes to rescue the theatre with an infusion of funds, merchandising, and commercialism. What follows is often-repetitive banter of "downtown" versus "uptown," selling out versus staying true to your art, feminism, body type and sex (of course). It's a typical "Let's put on a show!" formula a la 42nd Street, complete with snappy, almost vaudevillian quips and a few, very honest and touching moments. Yet, particularly in the first act, the forward motion is missing, and the characters rehash the same talking points. The Wet Spots' music is outstanding, yet often does very little to advance the plot. And what exactly happened to the B-story of Grace and Frankie? The roles are beautifully performed and sung by Gemma Isaac and Scott W. Abernethy, but their premise disappears after about the first 30 minutes.

Unfortunately, the show does not fully embrace its burlesque sensibilities. Much of the nudity comes extremely quickly, without giving the audience the tantalizing tease that makes burlesque so much fun. The ensemble is an exceptionally talented bunch, but appears to be a group of musical theatre dancers attempting to titillate without a real knowledge of burlesque traditions. There are two slowly-executed burlesque numbers: an extremely well-integrated bubble act and the indomitable Adra Boo Green's show-stopping strip in "Large and In Charge." These absolutely kill, and there's a reason. They give the show the seductiveness that burlesque demands, and that the audience is set up to expect.

Technically, Shine is a wonder, especially by festival standards. Director Roger Benington's set is simple, but extraordinarily evocative and effective. Andy Smith's lighting transported me to an historic burlesque hall. Choreography by Inga Ingenue and Roxie Moxie (who makes a fun turn as Shine's ward, Feral) is always fresh and inventive, especially the "school girl" number, which offers an excellent look at "corporatized" burlesque. The costumes, designed by Daniel Webster and the cast, are extraordinary.

Shine feels like a show that is almost ready. What is there is polished, extraordinarily well-performed and, often, great fun. With a tighter book and some more real burlesque acts, Shine is sure to be a hit. I certainly look forward to its next incarnation.

Original article at:

http://www.nytheatre.com/nytheatre/review_fnyc.php?t=shin10672

Seattle 2010 Production

Seattle City Arts Magazine
July 15, 2010
by Bond H

Entering the Bad, Bold World of Burlesque

Whoever you are, Shine: A Burlesque Musical will make you laugh at yourself. First it will make fun of prudes. It will point and laugh at stereotypical business men who are made squeamish by loose women and homosexual men. Then it will roll its eyes at precocious graduate students with no real marketable skills. And, of course, it scoffs at monogamy by ignoring it all together. It berates “easy breezy” Broadway love songs – accusing them of using all the right registers to drug listeners into thinking love can last forever. Finally, pants, financial stability, conventional talent, popularity, marketing, commercial enterprise and pop princess-packaged sexuality are also mocked repeatedly. And when you think everything has been torn down, and that there is nothing left to stand upon, to your surprise, you will find left intact a charming message about finding your community and identity –wherever it may be – and sticking to it.

It may sound trite for those looking for an edgy or more profound Burlesque exercise. But as a first-timer (the closest I’ve come to burlesque is at a variety show that unexpectedly invaded a Mediterranean restaurant where I was eating dinner), I found some pretty useful themes in this musical about a vaudeville theatre that sits on the precipice of gentrification.

With the bank breathing down her neck, alcoholic and stubborn Shine Meonne must walk the line of “selling out” or foreclosing on the theatre that has always been her home, history and future. A mother-figure of sorts, Shine leads a troupe of Burlesque performers, including divas, outcasts, prima donnas, darlings, queers and one character, both creepy and adorable, named “Feral” (Roxie Moxie). In a desperate attempt to not lose everything, Shine hires a producer and starts a slow, stubborn shuffle into the world of mainstream success and, in turn, creative compromise. The entire theatre, is in fact, challenged to find a way to do what they love to do – but do it better.

One of the most touching moments in the play is when Shine (played by Cass King, also a co-writer of the show), on the brink of giving up, sings “Perversions of Yesteryear,” a song about how the Internet has nearly erased a time and a culture when people had to leave their computer desks and talk to people to seek out a thrill. Inga Ingenue’s choreography beautifully opens this number with chorus members acrobatically riding mimed bicycles (with other dancers acting as the cycles) – and then acting out an entire slideshow of freeze-frame scenes that depict a whole world of sexual interaction, now eclipsed by high speed Internet access and manual autonomy. Sexual perversions threatened by lack of social skills as a sign of community dying in our desensitized times? I’d never thought of it that way.

Of course, all of this is couched in a message that’s more about loving yourself – in whatever shape you come in – than it is about encouraging sexual deviancy. In fact, it just sort of takes for granted that everyone is a little bit perverted – and it shows us how in a safe community, where friends back you up and newcomers keep an open mind: there’s less room for the abuse or despair that can come about when healthy sexual activity is stigmatized and marginalized.

I can see how this isn’t a new or exciting message for those versed in good Burlesque. But those types should get over it and be entertained by the well-written songs and creative staging of this sharp show. And for newcomers like me – take this as a great opportunity to get introduced to Burlesque: the pun-tastic vaudeville humor, the shameless celebration of the everyday human

body, the fabulous costumes and the refreshing perspective that MTV and magazines don't have the monopoly on "sexy" – unless you let them.

Other highlights: a costume that combines a porcupine disguise, a ukulele and another surprise; Adra Boo Green's stellar voice; Roxie Moxie's hair; and Mark Waldstein's bold performance as "Mr. Suit."

Original article at:

<http://www.cityartsmagazine.com/blog/2010/07/theatre-review-entering-bad-bold-world-burlesque>

Burlesque Seattle Press
July 17, 2010
By Jessica Price

A Touch Of Crass

The mere mention of a musical is often met with a groan; mentioning a burlesque musical- a groan followed by either a snicker or a squeal, depending on who you're asking. Rent was enough to scare most off the plight of the starving artist set to music. Fortunately for writers The Wet Spots (John Woods and Cass King), Seattle has an open mind coupled with a notoriously rabid preoccupation with burlesque. SHINE: A Burlesque Musical features a host of local luminaries as the chorus and dancing ensemble, as well as choreography developed by Inga Ingénue and assistant choreographer Ruby Mimosa. Billed as an "adult-oriented show which contains nudity and themes of healthy sexuality", SHINE's imaginative writers and director Roger Benington make it permissible to see a musical again, even if you're "not a musical type".

For starters, the cast is engaging- no small feat considering the singing is pitted against relatively low volume, slightly muddled canned instrumentation. The cheeky references and sexual content dip into the same gene pool as Cabaret- it felt like a young Liza might pop up and duet with Cass King (Shine Mionne). The story of a failing theatre and its tattered diamonds-in-the-rough cast was brought to life by Canadian actress Gemma Isaac (Grace) – who nailed tassel twirling as well as the very amusing role of a naïve gender studies student looking for a feminist epiphany via burlesque. Bodacious real-life blues belter Adraboo Green played bad-girl seductress Lulu Von Doozy, whose vocals sound best off the chain and at top volume. Anna Allen- aka Ernie and Elsa Von Schmaltz- led the chorus as Violet; both Allen and dancer Polly Wood demonstrated some killer comic timing and were ultra-comfortable in their roles, their stage backgrounds very apparent. Roxie Moxie (Feral) played her "hissing only" role like the sexy, post-apocalyptic stage monkey her Stripped Screw fans know and love.

Although I get a little antsy during musicals, songs like "The Nasty" (by Mark Growden), "Rocky Horror", "Perversions of Yesteryear", and "Stars" were clever, a little bit crass, and yes, catchy. When SHINE returns someday with a live band, things will really get interesting. For the moment, I'm actually kicking around the idea of seeing this *gasp* burlesque musical again.

Original article at:

<http://burlesqueseattle.com/2010/07/13/a-touch-of-crass/>

Broadway World
July 18, 2010
By Jay Irwin

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical

The Wet Spots in association with the Seattle Erotic Art Festival and Theatre Off Jackson are presenting their brand new musical, "Shine: A Burlesque Musical". And while the show needs a little fine tuning, it's certainly a naughty-licious good time.

Following the denizens of the Aristocrat Theater (a home for Burlesque since the late 1800's), "Shine" puts it's spotlight on things such as "what is art vs. making a buck" and "can you sacrifice family for your goals" all wrapped up in a rousing, only partially clothed, old style musical. And that's what they are at heart, an old style musical. Even though they blast Broadway right from the start, they really are Broadway themselves. Maybe not Broadway today with dancing and singing cartoon animals (although there is a singing porcupine in the show) but at its core it's quite reminiscent of the golden age style of musicals. It's kind of "42nd Street" with tits.

At the Aristocrat we have Shine Mione (Cass King one of the Wet Spots and co-writer of the show) who owns the theater that she inherited from her Grandfather. She's a boozy, free spirit who cares more about her performers and the show than actually getting people to see the show let alone pay the mortgage. So she has just a few weeks to pay the back mortgage or the bank will take the place. Enter Richard Suit (Mark Waldstein) who wants to buy the theater and turn it into something big. But Shine won't sell out so eventually she agrees to take Suit on as a producer so she can make the money she needs. But when he begins to interfere with the vision of the show, can the theater and her dysfunctional family survive? It's a pretty familiar old tale. "We need money. Hey kids let's put on a show!" But Mickey and Judy never performed like this. Add into the mix, Lulu Von Doozy (Adra Boo Green) the show's plus size bombshell star, and Grace (Gemma Isaac) who thought she was coming to interview Shine for her thesis, and Frankie (Scott W Abernethy) who just needs a job, two kids who get drawn into this world and end up stars in their own right. Not to mention the sexiest ensemble this side of the Vegas Strip and the show has the potential to be a big smash hit when they leave here and make their way to the New York Fringe Festival. But like I said, they need to tune some things up.

Some of the dialogue seems a bit forced and some of the lyrics a bit repetitive and clichéd at times. And the pace needs to be picked up. Especially in a show like this pace is everything and there were times, especially in act one, where things just ground to a halt. And while Act One needed the most help, Act Two picks right up and ends the show on a stellar note.

King is hilariously vivacious as the struggling Shine. And her "Perversions" number had the audience begging for more. Isaac and Abernethy are adorable as the two innocents who protest at first only to let their inner freak come out at the end. Green is stunning as the voluptuous lead of the show within a show and her 11 o'clock number "Large and in Charge" practically stopped the show. And for the fans of the Wet Spots, the other half of the duo, John Woods, is here as well in the guise of the theater's janitor who busts out with a quite touching song of his own. And did I mention the sexy ensemble? Yeah, I think I did, but they're worth mentioning again.

So all in all, the show needs a little work, but is a fabulous twist on the old formula musical. And the cast writhes, bumps and grinds their way right into your heart. But this is not a show for the faint of heart and definitely not for the kiddies. This is a very adult show with very adult sensibilities. So if you think you can handle it, get a sitter and take your main squeeze (or whatever squeeze you can find) and check out the hotties at the Aristocrat. And who knows, you may want to run away from home and join them yourself.

Original article at:

http://seattle.broadwayworld.com/article/BWW_Reviews_SHINE_A_BURLESQUE_MUSICAL_at_Theatre_Off_Jackson_20100718

Vancouver 2009 Production

The Georgia Straight
August 13, 2009
By Colin Thomas

Shine: A Burlesque Musical delivers copious amounts of pleasure

Shine: A Burlesque Musical totters a bit in its platform heels, but what the hell—that just makes its pasties swing more freely. In other words, this show isn't the slickest ever mounted, but it is a huge amount of fun. Everybody on-stage is having a fantastic time and that joy flows, barrier-free, into the audience. There's deep humanity in the material's progressive, playful politics. And the whole thing is so damn sex-positive it makes you want to make out with everybody you've ever been friendly with.

The story is simple enough. Hard-bitten, heart-of-gold Shine (Cass King) is about to lose the Aristocrat, the theatre she inherited from her grandfather. The outré burlesque acts Shine's been featuring aren't drawing big crowds. Producer Richard Suit (Michael Smith) reminds her of this when he offers to revamp the entertainment and save the day. "Remember this," he sings, "The next time you book an act / Who swallows his own piss." But Dick wants to push Shine too far into the oppressive mainstream. When he decides that Shine's headliner, Lulu Von Doozy (Noelle Pion), is too fat, Shine retorts, "How fat is she? So fat she looks like a normal woman? So fat she looks like she eats?" A stellar example of the new burlesque, SHINE is an empowered celebration of individuality.

This musical doesn't lecture, though. Instead, it happily embraces queerness, three-ways, raunchiness, and kink. Check out these lyrics from Mark Growden's "The Nasty": "I miss spreading your cheeks / and licking your bum / I miss kissing your lips / when they're soaked in my come." The Wet Spots—John Woods and King—wrote all of the other songs, and many are tremendous. In "Day Job", a blues number, restaurant workers shake cutlery bins to punctuate the beat. In the crisply staged "Perversions of Yesteryear", a nostalgic Shine sings about the pre-Internet days of sin as actors stage tableaux vivants of filthy postcards. "Everybody Wants to Be a Star" is an anthem worthy of Broadway.

In terms of performance, King holds the evening together. The woman has charisma and timing to burn. Playing a student who's writing a paper on the subversion of dominant gender roles, Gemma Isaac is also particularly polished. Timing is often wonky elsewhere, though—both actors and technicians could be more confident with their cues. The opening number, which cuts back and forth—shakily—between dialogue and music, gets the evening off to a weak start.

Still, SHINE delivers copious amounts of pleasure. Sit back and take it.

Original article at:

<http://www.straight.com/article-247605/shine-burlesque-musical-delivers-copious-amounts-pleasure>

The Vancouver Courier
August 19, 2009
By Jo Ledingham

Dirty SHINE Has Makings of a Cult Classic

Omigawd, what rude fun. Bushels of sequins. Cascades of tasselled pasties. Pillows of flesh. But if you don't want to hear the stripper's lament, "There's glitter from your tits/ Down to your lady bits/And it's giving you a nasty rash," stay away. Or if you won't join in the refrain, "You gotta hold on tight/And keep on humpin' the dream," take a pass. If you're under 18, you can't go--this is "adults only."

Burlesque isn't mainstream entertainment. And that's part of the point. There's a move afoot to revive burlesque, but to date that revival has been relegated to sleazy bars, Legion halls and old dance halls. So Screaming Chicken Theatrical Society (a burlesque company), The Wet Spots (comedy duo Cass King and John Woods) and writer Sam Dulmage have packaged bump-and-grind with song-and-dance, called it a burlesque musical and moved it into the Waterfront Theatre where it has all the makings of a cult classic.

Another point being made is that gals come in all shapes and sizes. When Lulu Von Doozy (Noelle Pion), blessed with "God-given double Ds," is described as "large" by Richard Suit (Michael Smith), Shine Mionne (King) cuts through the crap: "You mean she's fat. How fat is she? She's so fat she looks like a normal woman. She's so fat she looks like she eats. She's so fat she looks like 30 per cent of the audience."

Shine is the hard-drinking owner/manager of the Aristocrat, a down-on-its-heels burlesque house, an "illegitimate theatre since 1885" now facing the wrecking ball. Shine turns down entrepreneur Suit's proposal to save the place by gentrifying it, doing some marketing, making the content more acceptable to Mom and Pop by reducing the smut--and getting rid of Lulu. Shine won't do it: "We're family," she says.

Various two-ways, three-ways, hetero and homo couplings later--including actor Frankie Avid (Teddy Smooth) and Emily Carr graduate student Grace Anderson (Gemma Isaac)--the show goes on.

Talent goes further than cute butts and gorgeous boobs in this production, beginning with director Jen Cressey who keeps what she calls "this fabulous beast" on the prowl. Dozens of feathered, spandex and/or frou-frou costumes by Melody Mangler, Andra "Diamond Minx" Norton, King and the cast require quick changes. (Putting it all on is needed before you can take it all off, eh?) Music and lyrics by The Wet Spots are so catchy and risqu? you might fear breaking inappropriately into song the next day while, say, squeezing peaches at your local produce counter.

It's not all T&A. There's dancing. For example, lovely, leggy Keri Horton (as Feral who arrived from Borneo "wearing only a crate") executes sinewy, catlike moves to April O'Peel and Mangler's choreography.

And there's singing. Isaac and Smooth hook up in the lovely "Breezy/Cheesy/Three-Way Broadway Love Song" and later in the very, very naughty "Nasty" and its melancholy refrain, "I miss doing the nasty with you."

As buxom Lulu, Pion is well endowed with double D pipes to go with those aforementioned body parts: "I'm large and in charge," she belts out and that's no lie. Whatever Lulu wants, Lulu gets.

At the centre of it all is black-corseted, black-stockinged, high-booted King as Shine. With about five pounds of turquoise glitter on her eyelids it's a wonder she can keep her eyes open. This is a dynamite performance: sexy, tough on the outside, soft on the inside, gloriously outrageous, even Judy Garland-ish when, under a spot, she wonders songfully "Where are the perversions of yesteryear?" And then, in a series of tableaux, shows us.

Check out the show's trailer at www.shinemusical.com. If you're up for seeing SHINE, glam it up: wear a boa, a corset, or at the very least, racy underwear. I won't tell a soul.

Original article at:

<http://www.vancourier.com/technology/Dirty+SHINE+makings+cult+classic/2892864/story.html>

Vancouver Musicals
August 15, 2009
by Matt L.

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical (Review)

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical is not so much a traditional musical as it is a bawdy version of TV's old variety shows. Think of a cross between burlesque and an adult-only Muppet show. The show is a reworked version of an improvised one-act, originally known as *By the Seat of Our Panties*, presented at the Vancouver International Burlesque Festival in 2008.

The book by Sam Dulmage and The Wet Spots is thin, but works nevertheless. Theatre owner Shine Mionne (Cass King) and her troupe of burlesque performers are approached by a producer who promises to revitalise the ailing show with buckets of money. Various hijinks, gags, and word-play ensue.

The original music by first-time musical theatre writers the Wet Spots (John Woods and Cass King) has some bright spots and a tonne of potential, but isn't given the full opportunity to shine as brightly as it should.

The female cast is full of incredibly strong personalities and they almost completely overwhelm the male contingent of the show. Michael Smith as wealthy producer Richard Suit is nowhere nearly up to the challenge of matching the stage presence or vocal abilities of his female co-stars. Both of Smith's songs, "When You Deal With A Suit" and "Matinee Crowd" fell unfortunate victim to his weak singing voice and weren't given a fair airing.

The tempo of certain songs ("Everybody Wants to be A Star" and "Rocky Horror") could also use some reworking to better steady the pace of the overall show. There were too many slow numbers. SHINE's score would also be better served by the use of live music as opposed to the current pre-taped backing tracks. None of these criticisms should take away from the overwhelming positives of SHINE. I went in not knowing what to expect, but was completely won over.

Cass King is a natural performer and brings to life the "Perversions of Yesteryear." Her speaking delivery is peppered with shades of Katharine Hepburn and she periodically channels various other classic stars of the silver screen. "Broadway Love Song" wryly spoofs a musical-theatre ballad and makes for a strong closer to the first act.

The chorus/ensemble comprised of Violet Femme, April O'Peel, Calamity Kate and Sister Madly, Keri Horton and Fairlith Harvey provide a rock-solid backing to SHINE; there's not a single weak link in the bunch. Choreography by April O'Peel and Melody Mangler is inspired and sinfully fun.

Gemma Isaac as an overeager grad student and Teddy Smooth as an aspiring young actor make wild and dirty magic in "The Nasty." Noelle Pilon as Lulu Von Doozy, the resident diva, is a force of nature and sells all of her numbers with relative ease.

SHINE is chockfull of clever moments and snappy dialogue; it will absolutely and thoroughly entertain you and leave you wanting more.

Original article at:

<http://vanmusicals.com/2009/08/15/shine-a-burlesque-musical-review/>

Plank Magazine
August 16, 2009
By Maryse Zeidler

SHINE: Terrific Entertainment Rises Above Shortcomings

Vancouver: I got to the Waterfront Theatre on Granville Island a little tipsy on white wine and with meat still stuck between my teeth from dinner. Somehow, it seemed a fitting state to take in a burlesque musical.

SHINE: A Burlesque Musical is terrifically entertaining. Even if you don't like the story, the boobies and simulated sex should be enough to get you through to the end of the night. No need to wait until the end of this review: I'm telling you straight up, right now, that you should go. Have a couple of drinks at the bar. Take a friend. Make out at the back of the theatre. It's that kind of show, people.

The main storyline is not ground-breaking, but it is quite cleverly written, with some real stand-out moments. Shine Mionne (Cass King) is the owner and artistic director of the flailing Aristocrat Theatre; money is tight, and her burlesque performers are getting antsy. In comes the aptly named Richard "Dick" Suit (Michael Smith), offering big money and his services as a producer. What follows is an ostentatious pageant of musical numbers as the artistic director/producer duo bicker over which acts to keep in the show, one striving to preserve burlesque's edgy roots, the other trying to produce a saleable, profitable show that will bring in the audiences.

As trite a comedy as SHINE may appear on the surface, anyone who works in the arts knows damn well that in these trying financial times, these are real and relevant issues. Although SHINE may romanticize the starving artist, it hits the audience with some very honest moments. A great example of this candid honesty is Shine Mionne's short but powerful soliloquy about the looming threat that hangs over her head: if everything fails, move back to Saskatoon and get a job in a bank.

The story is interspersed with dancers rehearsing and auditioning their numbers for the show, and some of the numbers are real gems. I don't know how they did it, but making the Muppet aliens sexy and alluring made me feel warm and gushy in all the right places. It's a moment that has been seared into my cerebral cortex forever.

Unfortunately, there are also too many sloppy numbers that need a couple of extra weeks of intense rehearsal. Yes, I understand that burlesque may be more about empowerment than polished performances. And yes, I understand that it's supposed to be gritty. But I still don't think it's acceptable to present a weak performance.

Indeed, the performers in SHINE vary greatly not only in (cup) size, but in capability. I have a robust pet peeve for performers who do not project their voices or attempt to develop any stage presence – and there are some in Shine that are simply too amateur for my tastes. It is all the more frustrating given the well-written script; with some more professional performers the show could have gone a lot further.

Case in point: Noelle Pion's voice is incredible (more on this below). However, she isn't the right fit for the role of Lulu Von Doozy, a brash, don't-you-mess-with-me, big-momma type; it isn't until part way through the second act that Pion starts looking truly comfortable in the part.

Much of SHINE is carried by a fantastic and completely convincing performance by Cass King. I first saw King, who is one half of the musical duo the Wet Spots, perform in 2003 – in a basement

gym on Commercial Drive at the annual Spartacus Christmas party. I had just moved to Vancouver and had no idea what I was in for. All these years later, I'm glad to see that her acting and writing skills are just as memorable as her regular musical act.

The biggest disappointment of SHINE is the sound. I'm not going to tart this up: it is terrible. I'm not sure who decided to mic some of the songs and not others, but I would have preferred, given the assault on my aural senses, that no one was amplified. I am not an expert when it comes to the science of sound mixing, but I can tell when it feels like someone is jabbing a pencil into my eardrum. Too bad, given that there are some great singers on stage (notably Noelle Pion). I guess that's where the wine comes in handy.

Original article at:

<http://www.plankmagazine.com/review/shine-terrific-entertainment-rises-above-shortcomings>

Beyond Robson
August 16, 2009
By Jon

The Slinky Satire of Shine: A Burlesque Musical

I've been well aware of Vancouver's burgeoning neo-burlesque community for awhile now, as our city has been gaining some international renown for the scene. Despite a personal proclivity to attend local theatre for free, my closest experience to real burlesque was dealing with an over-champagned and over-sarcastic sister at an overpriced evening of cabaret-tourism at the Moulin Rouge in Paris. That counts, right?

Over the last few years local burlesque has been moving out of the underground; shows have been staged at The WISE hall since the mid-90s, but it's only with the 2006 establishment of the Vancouver International Burlesque Festival that the scene really reached the local theatre "mainstream." Shine: A Burlesque Musical has received major media hype and began its 10-day run on August 12th. With the existence of a full length neo-burlesque musical in a theatre on Granville Island, playing just down the street from Altar Boyz, I figured it was finally time to experience this local renaissance of subversive sexuality. Oh, and nipple tassels.

As the fiancee and I in all too typical fashion didn't find ourselves on Granville Island until 5 minutes before show time, we mistakenly started sprinting (read: jogging) for the Granville Island Stage. With eyes blinded by the house light-shine of sequined gowns, sequined purses, and slicked grey hair, I quickly realized our error (one too many Arts Club reviews there, Jonny) and we made a u-turn for the Waterfront Theatre. The eclectic but well-tattooed crowd milling outside had me thinking we were right this time; after doing a quick cigarette and visible bra-line count, I was convinced. Securing a stage on Granville Island? Check. Stealing away the Arts Club season ticket holders? Well... whatever. The evening I attended was sold out, the crowd was in stitches throughout, and the strength of the musical proves the potential of neo-burlesque beyond mere cult popularity.

Shine: A Burlesque Musical is the product of a collaboration between cabaret comedians The Wet Spots (Cass King and John Woods), the busy Screaming Chicken Theatrical Society, and writer Sam Dulmage. It's the story of an aging burlesque theatre struggling to stay relevant and economically viable in modern Vancouver. The show has been billed as a mashed up send-up/celebration of all that is contemporary burlesque, and should prove distinctly entertaining for the connoisseur and newbie alike.

The performance began as an improvisational one-act made for the 2008 Burlesque festival, titled "By the Seat of our Panties" and created in a mere 18 days by the Wet Spots. After that, Woods couldn't stop writing songs, Dulmage was brought on to help sketch out a plotline, and Shine was born. The original was a burlesque-style parody of the burlesque scene itself, and the subsequent full length musical, complete with intermission and at least one "cheezy Broadway love song," maintains the self-effacing tone and broadens the ironic assault to include most musical theatre, not to mention jabs at DIY culture and local arts at large. Along the way there are musical send-ups of everything from cabaret to rockabilly, psychedelia and disco to hip hop and modern pop.

While the show pokes fun at just about every stage (and backstage) convention, at heart it's really love letter to the local burlesque community. It's a performance tradition and group of artists "held together with chicken wire and duct tape," in the words of co-songwriter and star Cass King, who has been performing überlesque in Canada since 1989. She could be Shine's highlight performer, playing the bitter but passionate owner and operator of The Aristocat, Shine Mionne.

The fringe popularity and inherent independence of the scene is at the heart of Shine's plot. Not only must our lead resist the pressure of Richard Suit (Michael Smith), who promises a surge in ticket-sales if the show is made more family friendly, she's also forced to handle the arrival of eager burlesque neophytes Frankie and Grace. Teddy Smooth (... wow) plays the former, a wannabe actor from Swift Current, while Gemma Isaac handles Grace, an Emily Carr grad student working on her gender-studies thesis (our meta "innocent"). The pair is strong throughout, and provide one of the many musical highlights in their performance of the blissfully dirty "Doing the Nasty."

And I can't forget to mention co-songwriter John Woods as the hilariously creepy jumpsuited janitor, ever ambling mid-stage, sweeping the confetti remnants of dance numbers and ready to offer a ballad-backing harmonica at the drop of a bra. He leads two songs that capture the Shine's essential themes: "Everybody Wants to Be a Star" and "Keep Pumping/Humping the Dream." Those are probably not the actual titles.

Neo-burlesque may be largely about parodying and modernizing a theatrical tradition, but burlesque itself has always been highly progressive and uniquely self aware. The real resurgence in popularity must rest equally with the scene's ability to break down traditional gender, sexuality, and performance boundaries. Burlesque (neo or otherwise) poses a challenge to our culture's fundamental erotic values, calling into question what constitutes sexuality and who is permitted to be sexual. It helps to expose our society's rigid separation of sexuality and real life or art, embedding it within drama, humour, and music. While never nearly as explicit as a modern strip show, the sexual expression is vastly more genuine and ultimately far healthier.

In an often oppressively gendered and image-obsessed culture, burlesque is empowering. Breaking down body image barriers has become a primary allure of the modern burlesque experience, and is represented explicitly in the big n' busty Lulu. Played by Noelle Pion, your typical mega confident plus-sized burlesque seductress with a showstopping voice (and a few other surprises). What really sets Lulu apart is the clarity with which her body image issues -- and those of a community -- are played out. After some opening jokes from Pion to set the tone, Suit declares his intention to replace her with a slimmer singer to attract bigger crowds. The subsequent power struggle becomes a driving plot point and feels authentic throughout.

Body image issues are far from the only thing that sell the play's sexual reality or fuel its hilarity. From STDs to the stock market to the Georgia Straight, Shine's satire isn't limited to the world of burlesque, and should connect with any cognizant Vancouverite in 2009. While the plot may be pretty thin, the jokes are consistently strong and delivered with brilliant timing. Nods to choreographers April O'Peel and Melody Mangler along with director Jen Cressey; the cast's movement, both in and outside of the musical numbers, was really something to behold.

And how about those song and dance numbers? Where else would you see a central performance about the transformative power of watching Rocky Horror as an adolescent, watch a dancer use a string of (faux) sausages as a feather boa, or view a striptease that could only be described as something out of the lost pilot to an R-rated HBO Muppets Show. Complete with Slinky tassels. Yip yip.

My date, an experienced dancer, and myself, an experienced shower-singer, were slightly put off by the inconsistent quality of a few performances, but neither of us have the chutzpah for both puns and partial nudity in front of a theatre audience (particularly one so well-tattooed...) While King, Smooth (wow), and Isaac are wonderful throughout, most other performances were hindered by moments of weakness. But vocal prowess and dance expertise are hardly what neo-burlesque is about. The story feels real, the humour always hits, and the song and dance are

delivered with conviction and total enthusiasm. Burlesque is about a celebration of human bodies, of comedy, dance, music, love, lust, and everything else that's real. Midway through this meta-meta-musical one casted heckler yelled "The Muppets had more talent!" Perhaps, but they weren't nearly this beautifully human, man. Also, they offered less tassel-twirling. Far less tassel-twirling.

Original article at:

http://jotwiki.beyondrobson.com/arts/2009/08/the_slinky_satire_of_shine_a_burlesque_musical/

Hummingbird604
August 13, 2009
By Raul Pacheco

Shine (Musical theatre review)

The Vancouver theatre scene is just amazing, let me tell you. Greg and I were talking about this while having a drink at the Backstage Lounge just before entering the theatre for opening night of Shine, a wonderful burlesque musical production. Fair warning – burlesque, by its very nature, this type of musical production does have some degree of nudity and coarse language. And yes, there was full frontal nudity.

But the most important element was, in my view, the fact that this amazing production was able to bring the audience to their feet, clapping, singing along and giving a standing ovation for over 10 minutes. The storyline shows the intertwined lives of several burlesque has-beens, wannabes and potentials, attempting to resurrect a derelict theatre and a seemingly dead career in musical theatre. Every member of the cast is powerful and the singing is fantastic (although at some points, I could tell that the voice of Noelle Pion overpowered that of almost every other member of the cast – she is simply amazing). Cass King shines as (coincidentally) Shine Mionne, the main character and owner of The Aristocrat, the theatre she's trying to save (along with the close-knit family of artists).

Shine does indeed shine, it's a wonderful musical and I have to thank the production team for inviting me to see it, frankly as I have mentioned before, I only recommend things that I myself would have paid to see, and I'd definitely drop the coin to see Shine again. Very much worth it. Warning – it has nudity (full frontal), coarse language and A LOT of references to Vancouver. The fact that it is so well adapted to Vancouver and it does so many references made it even more fun to see.

Original article at:

<http://hummingbird604.com/2009/08/13/shine-musical-theatre-review/>