April 26, 2019

Lyric Theater N

“Nunsense”

Book, Music & Lyrics Dan Goggin

Director Ashley Wells

Choreographer Matthew Sipress

Joyously funny! Outrageously comical! Brenda Williams, Cheyanne Marie, Brook Melton, Viviana Goodwin and Ashley Mandanas, as the hapless Little Sisters of Hoboken in Lyric Theatre’s “Nunsense,” zing comic lines faster than a speeding bullet and so silly one was almost afraid to laugh for fear of missing the next gem.

Mother Superior, Sister Mary Regina ( Williams), has a problem. The cook, Sister Julia, child of God, accidently killed 52 of the sisters with botulism in the vichyssoise. The remaining five sister, who were spared because of being away playing bingo at a neighboring convent, are trying to raise money to bury the four sisters who are being kept in the freezer. Sister Regina had miscalculated the cost of burial and used some of the insurance money to purchase a big screen TV for the convent. Thus, the crisis. Adding to the incongruity of women in religious dress cavorting across the stage is the equally silly set. The high school is performing “Grease,” which Sister Regina mistakenly calls Vaseline, and the students did not wish to have their set disturbed for the one-night benefit by the sisters. Thus, there are a bed covered in fluffy pink pillows, a jukebox, a drug store bar and chairs as the furnishings and colorful numbers and musical symbols on the set’s floor.

The show includes almost every joke about nuns ever told and too many silly situations to mention them all. Among the funny scenes are Goodwin as Sister Amnesia quizzing the audience members. Actual prizes were awarded. Mandanas as Sister Leo wants to be the first dancing nun. Her dying swan is priceless. Melton as Sister Robert stopped the show with “I want to be a Star.” And Marie as Sister Hubert brought the house down with her soul version “I’m Holier than Thou.”

The comic centerpiece of the show is performed by Williams. Sister Regina innocently inhales a substance found in the girls’ locker room and becomes high. Williams skillfully builds her drug induced high until one is laughing so hard it hurts. Regina gets stuck between a bar stool and the stage. She finds Elvis behind the jukebox and stealthily climbs a tower while the rest of the nuns carry on with the program. It is comic soliloquy at its best.

Under Wells direction, the show clips along. The interaction of the players with their very well defined characters is outstanding.

While this show is an innocent, silly view of nuns, it never makes fun of their religious dedication.

“Nunsense” will play at the Myriad Gardens Waterstage, outdoors through May 9. Masks are required upon entrance and social distancing is observed.

“Nunsense” is a delightful way to spend a spring evening.