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Peggie Miller: 'Addams Family Musical' delivers as promised

By Peggie Miller, Performing arts columnist Published 3:34 pm, Tuesday, October 25, 2016



Students in combined choirs and band at Montgomery High School saluted veterans during their annual Veterans' Day concert last November. The 2016 appreciation concert takes place Nov. 7 at 6:30 p.m. in the high school auditorium, with a reception at 5:30 p.m. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early as the event usually becomes standing room only.

With a little impudence, a bit of audacity, a whole lot of chutzpah, and oodles of talent, Stage Right of Texas delivered just what it promised - an evening of superior entertainment in downtown Conroe's **Crighton Theatre**.

"The Addams Family Musical" opened Friday eve to approximately 330 attendees. The got full value for their money.

"The Addams Family Musical" is vaguely Shakespearean: Sometimes capricious as "A Mid Summer Night's Dream": Sometimes witchy as "Macbeth."

But, let's not bury Caesar with praise; just extol how good to hear so much laughter rippling through a crowd entertained by great choreography from Cricket Pepper; cool and catchy tunes from creators **Marshall Brickman**, Rick Elice, and **Andrew Lippa**.

Director **Brenda Storseth** and her assembly of assistants pulled off a show that was expected to be successful, and they did it in spades.

From the captivating sets; to the enhancement of perfect lighting and special effects; to the imaginative costumes, makeup and wigs; the production came close to reaching the full moon in the sky that night, and was reflected - whimsically - onstage.

"The Addams Family Musical" is morbid and funny. That's largely due to the abilities of the cast members, like **James Colburn** who played the bald and sometimes impish **Fester Adams**. Where has he been for 27 years? His bio lists impressive credits, and the reason for those is quite clear.

Then there's young Ara Hollyday who portrays wild child **Pugsley Addams** with confidence and stage presence particularly obvious during his vocal duets.

Others make their Crichton debuts in this show, and deserve their own recognition, with hopes to see them onstage further on through the season.

But we're not snubbing the tried and true; the regulars that local directors draw upon for just about every production.

In his program bio as Gomez Addams, longtime **Stage Righter Katt Gilcrease** writes concerning **Jennifer Marshall's** depiction of the Addams' family matriarch, "there is no other Morticia." I think you'll agree.

This may mark **Cristy Campobella's** best performance to date. Early on she's Alice Beineke, the demure mother of Wednesday Addams' fiancé Lucas Beineke, depicted by **Austin Colburn**. But as the show progresses Cristy transforms from a serene, poetry-spouting mom to an unbound woman whose antics startle even the Addams family during a get acquainted dinner in their grand hall.

You have to watch the preceding scene to fully understand why this happens. All the deceased ancestors make their presence known in the - er - flesh - less than more.

Local theatre buffs have learned not to be astonished at anything **Adam Isbell** does onstage, but he tops even himself this time in the split personality role of Poncho de Addams/Maria Tequila. It's best left at that for now.

Sara Priesler has proved over and over that she settles for nothing less than perfection. She achieves this yet again in the role of Wednesday Addams, the daughter about to wed into a "normal" family. See Alice Beineke above.

Various scenes include a menacing puppet ala "The **Little Shop of Horrors**," demonstrating that **Jane Haley** is quite an adept puppeteer.

In eggplant purple, matching guitar adorned with a weird emblem, and interesting footwear, **Kevin Downs** reinvents "the entertainer formerly known as Prince."

You'll be happy to see grunting zombie Lurch (Bill Shafer) finally show some emotion other than ugh-ugh when he becomes deliriously happy near the final curtain. The reason has escaped me, so please refresh my memory after you see it. Check out Lurch's "elevator" shoes that add at least a foot to his long, skinny underpinnings.

Wispy Marilyn Moore and **Jim Murph** of the broad shoulders add to the fullness of any cast, as they do here.

I could continue, but why? You can see "The Addams Family Musical" yourself in the Crighton Theatre, 234 N. Main. It runs weekends through Nov. 6. Reserve at 936-441-7469 or www.stage-right.org.

You likely heard that Houston TV Channel 13 broadcast journalist **Art Rascon** suffered a snake bite. It's now what they call "old news."

Considering the perils Rascon has experienced reporting from trouble spots across the globe, this one was ironic: The newsman was walking on the driveway of his Woodlands home at the time.

Area residents were wildly enthusiastic when they learned that Rascon was committed to speak in **Montgomery High School** football stadium Nov. 1 during the tribute to American veterans that MISD is hosting for its 20th consecutive year. After all, it's

pretty uncommon to witness firsthand a reporter of Rascon's eminence who highly respects veterans. But with his snakebite, locals feared a disappointment.

Happily, concerns were put to rest after a very short time. Rascon will speak at the MHS stadium just as planned, according to **Barry Russak**, longtime MISD volunteer an army veteran.

Due to Rascon's tenacity, developed over years of reporting from around the world, he was back at his desk in Houston, anchoring the evening news a couple days after the snake (rumored to be a copperhead) took a bite that resulted in a brief hospitalization for Rascon.

MISD is recognized for its homage to all American veterans. The Nov. 1 honors begin in the district stadium at 10 a.m., with a Nov. 3 rain date. More than 2,000 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders will cheer from the stands along with hundreds of spectators. Honor guard salutes and flyovers are planned, as well. All veterans, families, and the general public are invited to attend without charge. The stadium is on Texas 105 West, near Montgomery city limits.

Student participation public events honoring veterans are scheduled at other MISD campuses on Nov. 7 and 11. Call MISD office at 936-276-2000 for particulars.

Peggie Miller *may be reached with people and performing arts news at pegmiller01@gmail.com or call her at 936-448-6455.*

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