

REVIEW

# Hairspray: bring back the confidence

★★★★★

Rachel Musson opened "Hairspray" by turning night into morning with her powerful vocals in the song "Good Morning, Baltimore."

She was Tracy Turnblad, the star of the musical. Every aspect of her character was aptly embraced by Musson from the sweet, bright voice to the confident body language. But she wasn't the only person who made the musical the gem that it was. The stage of "Hairspray" shone not of reflections from the stiff hairdos, but from the young cast brimming with talent.

Lili Whittier was an attention-grabber consistently throughout the show. She was amazing as Penny Pingleton, Turnblad's innocent, curious and energetic friend. Her strong vocals complemented her acting skills as she perfected Pingleton down to every squeal and gaze.

James Scalise as Link Larkin was a beautiful mix of sensitivity and charm. His appeal was undeniable in his solo. Simone Crews did not look like a high school student — she was in character as Motormouth Maybelle down to her bones as a vocal powerhouse with amazingly flexible hips. And Sadie Frank's Velma had a posture that amplified her character's villainous aura.

The spotlight, however, was on Jack Carmichael and Ethan Fox. Their portrayal of Edna and Wilbur Turnblad was downright hilarious and lovely. The audience gave their loudest applause to their number, "(You're) Timeless To Me." Carmichael in drag was convincing. He lived as an ordinary housewife with hidden dreams on stage. Fox, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye as he charged like a bull towards his onstage wife, drove the crowd wild and made his performance very memorable.

Faith Jones, as Little Inez — raspy, strong and bottomless — elicited goosebumps.



Zhai Yun Tan  
Arts & Culture Staff Writer

In terms of choreography, Daniel Johnson, who plays Inez's brother Seaweed, presented his slick dance moves that were impressive. The rest of the cast did a great job in singing backup and dancing in harmony. The wardrobe boasted flouncy dresses and sharp, colorful suits for Corny

Collins that were eye-catching and attractive.

However, since it was the first show, nerves compromised some of the actors' performances. All the actors could have benefited from being more confident in their expressions and voices, especially in the beginning and end of the show. Frank's Velma would be even more convincing if she had more confidence to back her gaze. While Andrew Cook had the swagger of Corny Collins, he lacked expression. A flash of smile on Crews as Maybelle would have made her character more engaging.

There were also instances when the singing was drowned out by the music and backup singing. The first meeting between Corny Collins and Tracy Turnblad as well as the number "Without Love" are examples. Scalise's voice was hard to hear over the noise in several numbers.

Despite of these minor hiccups, the show was immensely entertaining and

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can only get better. It conveyed the spirit of Hairspray well with its infectious energy and meaningful message. Hopefully the cast will understand how great a job

they've done and bring that confidence to their next performance.

If they do so, this show will be "the only thing that's better than hairspray."



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