

A beauty of a show

GARY SMITH

The Hamilton Spectator

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It's a winner. Local show people might have thought Theatre Ancaster bit off more than it could chew with the big Disney musical about courageous little Belle and the Beast with a heart. Well, the good news is they haven't.

They've pulled off this musical monster with enough grand effects, melodic singing, dramatic truth and just plain charming heart and soul to make your mouth water for more.

For one thing, the show has a terrific anchor in Alyssa Curto, who plays Belle with just the right touch of courage and pluck. She fills the stage with an exuberant presence and sings sweetly and passionately, making every moment count.

Kai Arnel is an effective Beast. His transformation to handsome prince at the show's final few moments is believable and honest.

A large supporting cast works well creating a handsome musical and acting ensemble adding to every important moment onstage. A number of folks stand out. Noah Hicks is terrific as LeFou, adding moments of real comedy and physical theatrics.

Jan Chithalen is a bumptious and raucous Gaston, sometimes straining for the high notes but always selling the songs no matter what the effort.

Cindy Rees Knowles is an endearing Mrs. Potts, Tammy Hughes a delightful Wardrobe and Jennifer Watson a sexy Babette.

Add Todd Adamowich's sly Lumiere, Dan Sanderson's naughty Cogsworth and Mitchell Barlow's perky little Chip and you have a great company.

Director Nupi Gokhale has done a fine job of keeping this musical in perpetual motion. Where her inexperience shows is in the silhouette set changes that, considering the clever set design of Courtney Hamara and special effects of Al Croxall, might easily have been handled in a more imaginative fashion.

Technical ills plaguing the Ancaster production were dull lighting that adds little in the way of atmosphere and sound design that is too hot and metallic for such a sweet musical.

All in all though, Theatre Ancaster's Beauty and the Beast is a brave effort. It's well worth a look.

Gary Smith has written on theatre and dance for The Hamilton Spectator for more than 25 years.

Showtime

What: Beauty and the Beast

Who: Theatre Ancaster

Where: Ancaster High School Auditorium, Jerseyville Road, Ancaster

When: Continues Nov. 28, 29, 30, Dec. 5 and 6 at 8 p.m. Matinees at 2 p.m., Nov. 30 and Dec. 6.

Tickets: 905-304-SHOW



Sheryl Nadler, the Hamilton Spectator