

Maycomb County comes to Hays County in *To Kill a Mockingbird*

A Review by Oda Lisa

The current production of *To Kill a Mockingbird* staged at the Price Center in San Marcos is a work of art worthy of sold-out performances. Presented by Black Diamond Cabaret Theatre in “black box” style, the script is faithfully adapted by Christopher Sergel from Harper Lee’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, which confronts bigotry and gross social injustice at point-blank range. Set in fictitious Maycomb County, Alabama in 1935, the story depicts the harrowing ordeals inflicted upon the Finch family due to lawyer Atticus Finch’s defense of a black man accused of raping a white teenage woman. The story’s narration is presented as recollections of an adult Jean Louise Finch as she looks back to those life-changing events when she was a small child nicknamed Scout.

Director and producer, Lee Coleé, explains that this is the first time this play has been presented in Hays County. Beginning the creative process in October, 2013, she patiently and carefully chose the actors through a series of exacting auditions, resulting in spot-on casting. Coleé notes, “I think this cast and I have bonded really well. Each cast member is perfect for their part. I’m proud of every single one of them. I’m proud of the show. I hope we have an impact on the community in a positive way, not for just entertainment, but as a history lesson that is absorbing.”

Each of the 28 principal and supporting actors played his or her particular role with enthusiasm and conviction. Moreover, the three child actors give remarkable performances for ones so young. Vivi Hirschfield, 9, who leads as Scout, not only delivers her lines like a seasoned actor, but she was able to grasp the essence of the play’s theme of empathy. When asked about her favorite part of being in the play, she replies, “It showed a lot of people, like Atticus always says, that if you can consider things from other people’s point of view, you get along a lot better. In the end, it shows that. I really like it.” Nine-year old Ryan Odom, as Scout’s brother, Jem, enjoys the action of the courtroom scene. Even though the climax is intense and terrifying, like a veteran of the stage he states, “I’m okay with all that.” Luke Pool, 8, likes best the “mob scene” that his character Dill is involved in “when we got to punch Bob Ewell,” who was portrayed by Kevin Karwoski with a viciousness akin to a rabid dog’s.

Cast in the role of Atticus Finch last April, Bob Elliott appreciates the good amount of time he had to memorize his ample lines. No stranger to the theatre, he marvels at the talent of his young co-stars. He says, “They’ve got a lot of words that they’ve got to come up with. They did an especially good job, not only with the lines, but also with the character behind the lines, the inflection, the subtext.”

Emotions ranging from sorrow to gratitude run high throughout the play, giving the story’s unfolding an on-the-edge-of-your-seat quality. The most notable tearful performance belongs to Crystal Odom as grown up Jean Louise Finch. Referring to her character’s most troubling recollection, she explains, “The memories were so intense, it was like she was reliving it. She was watching herself get attacked. She was watching herself being terrified for her brother’s life. And, it was just too much for her.” One magical theatre moment occurs during Atticus’, questioning of the defendant, Tom Robinson, convincingly played by Jeremiah Jordon. Anyone with a tender heart has to sympathize with the soft-spoken Robinson as he understands that he is a doomed man. The compelling dialogue and interchange between caring lawyer and wrongly accused client produced the illusion that an actual court scene was in progress.

To Kill a Mockingbird is a theatre event well worth the time and ticket to experience it. Shows run on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. from November 21 through December 6. Reservations are recommended, as seating is limited. For advanced tickets, call (512) 847-7934, or on-line at www.leecoleestudios.com. The Price Center is located at 222 W. San Antonio in downtown San Marcos.



Atticus Finch (Bob Elliott) is the embattled attorney for a black man unjustly accused of the rape of a white woman. Finch is confronted by the racist accuser (Kevin Karwoski) who has to be restrained by the sheriff (Marvin Carson).