

Theatre Review: ‘Mary Poppins’ at Merry–Go–Round Playhouse

June 8, 2014 by [Natasha Ashley](#)



Mary Poppins (Elizabeth Earley) and Bert (Eric Coles) dance with the rest of the ensemble in the park.
Photo by Isaac James.

Broadway in the Finger Lakes at Auburn’s Merry – Go – Round Playhouse is delighting audiences with its production of Disney’s and Cameron Mackintosh’s *Mary Poppins* based off of the popular 1964 Disney movie and the original books by P.L. Travers. The toe-tapping and entertaining offering – directed by Ed Sayles – is a must see for everyone young and old that adores the ‘practically perfect’ and well-known nanny.

Of course, most know the classic story of the perfect nanny that lands at 17 Cherry Tree Lane to care for the two Banks children. Mary Poppins (Elizabeth Earley) takes the children on a magical journey while providing lessons that will help them grow and care for others. She not only saves the children from themselves, but reveals to Mr. Banks (Patrick Oliver Jones) and Mrs. Banks (Lucy Horton) what is really missing in Jane and Michael’s (Shannon Beel and Séamus Finnian Gailor) lives – their parents.

The large cast provides a stellar performance of the Sherman Brothers' beloved classic songs and makes the audience familiar with the Disney movie fall in love again with "Spoonful of Sugar" and "Feed the Birds." You can expect the toe-tapping numbers like "Step in Time" and "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" to be nothing less than dazzling with the well done choreography by Brian Collier. There are also ample opportunities to appreciate the new songs that George Stiles and Anthony Drewe wrote for the original stage adaptation that premiered on London's West End, including "Brimstone and Treacle," "Being Mrs. Banks," and "Anything Can Happen." Musical director Jeff Theiss and his excellent orchestra is a key ingredient to the success of this musical material in addition to the cast.

The actors are nothing short of extraordinary as they traverse David Arsenault's beautifully designed and remarkable moving sets that transport us to 17 Cherry Tree Lane and the magical wonderland park. Elizabeth Earley – our Mary Poppins – glides, dazzles, and soars with such consistency she truly embodies what we all love of the character of Mary Poppins. Her voice soars with such power and passion as she lights up the stage with "A Spoonful of Sugar" and "Anything Can Happen." Her facial expressions are spit-spot on. Eric Coles charms us as Bert in "Let's Go Fly a Kite" and "Step in Time." Patrick Oliver Jones plays the uptight disgruntled father with such 'precision and order' and has a standout moment during "A Man Has Dreams." Lucy Horton truly standouts every moment she is on stage with her voice and acting skills. She sings "Being Mrs. Banks" with such beauty and humbleness.

The list of standout performers doesn't end there. Shannon Beel lets Jane Banks' spunky and gutsy personality shines through. Séamus Finnian Gailor, as Michael, shows that he has talent and professionalism that are well beyond his years. ***Audrey Federici doubles as the Birdwoman and Miss Andrew. Every time she sang she had such power and presence that the audience was in awe of her voice, acting range, and comedic timing.*** The entire supporting cast soared, twirled, and dazzled during the large dance numbers.

The present production is a high-flying adventure that will surely delight everyone. It is full of big dance numbers, colorful costumes, and a flying nanny which is what we all know and love. You will want to listen to the old and new songs again and again. As usual Broadway in the Finger Lakes has brought its audience a beautiful, memorable, and professional production of a musical. *Mary Poppins* should not be missed.

Mary Poppins runs at Auburn, New York's Merry – Go –Round Playhouse as part of the Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival. For tickets and information on the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse call (315)255-1785/1-800-457-8897