

Theatre - Coming of Age

Carol Yotsuda

"RENT" is proof positive that when you invest in your children, you will be rewarded far beyond your expectations.

Hawaii Children's Theatre Summer Stars 2010 program presented their first Alumni Show and it was totally awesome to see these same little kids you had way back in third grade or first saw on stage in a children's chorus now on stage as young adults delivering a heart wrenching serious musical of this caliber.

Jonathan Larson's book, music and lyrics delivered in solos, duets, ensembles by some very talented young adults deals with serious stuff-- friendship, sexuality, love, death, the homeless, loyalty, and all the emotions that are conjured up as friends deal with each other.

Artistic director Jennifer Downs, herself a product of the HCT from a very young age, belies her youth as she skillfully shaped a cast not much younger than herself into one of the best productions this island has seen.

Stellar performances by stage veterans Thom Newman (adult), Sam Alfiler, Elaine Guest, Jorey Cantu, Natalie Capino, Kameron Fort, Christian Fort, Chester Chandler-Borges and a whole company of very strong singers (Megan Ross, Burton Olivier, Dexter Olivier, Billy Quebido, Casia Koulbanis, Cathy Miner, Kendall Beck) was accompanied by a small but top notch band headed by musical director Nina Saraos on keyboard, Rosie Alfiler on piano, Paul Koulbanis on guitar, Mike Odo on bass and Cary Valentine of Drums. Dave Horger was the rehearsal pianist. The role of aerialists were shared by Tamara Stryker and Michelle Rundbaken.

Those behind the scenes did a great job with Marc Sicignano as choreographer, lighting and set designer, Maile Speetjens on costumes, Steve Whitney on sound, and set construction by Ron Horoshko, Ishmael Cantu, Eddie Rodriguz, Marc Sicignano and the Kaiola Canoe Club.

A production of this quality does not happen overnight. Most of these students have been training for years by their participation in the many theatrical experiences provided by Hawaii Children's Theatre, Kauai Performing Arts Center (Dennis McGraw, Arnold Meister), Kauai Sings (Jason Blake), singing lessons by coaches like Dolly Kanekuni, dance choreographers like Carol Culver and the instructors from the many dance schools on the island, from drama experiences in schools such as those at Kalaheo Elementary (Marly Madayag) and Island School (Peggy Ellenberg), from musical programs for children and youth like those provided at Kapaa Middle School (Mary Lardizabal), Island School (Philip Steinbeck) and Kalaheo School and many more....

There has been an increasing wealth of exposure for children and youth in music, dance, drama and other art forms, all of which has groomed these young folks to find a place for their talents to develop and bloom.

The most amazing thing about all of these programs is that most of them are funded by those who attend the performances and donors who support the programs. Kauai is a community that supports theatre and is rewarded by the beautiful home-grown talents that grace their stages....something to be proud of.

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