

'Full Monty' in Torrington is sexy, sentimental musical

By Chesley Plemmons Theater Review, Arts Critic
Published: 07:43 p.m., Tuesday, February 9, 2010

Theater review

Being unemployed is no fun. Ask any guy whose pride has been put on hold as he waits in the unemployment line, worries about paying his bills, or sees his wife becoming the family bread winner.

So what makes "The **Full Monty**," about out-of-work steel workers in Buffalo, N.Y., such an engaging, uplifting musical entertainment?

"Monty," currently on the boards at the **Warner Theater** in Torrington, is a sassy, old-style buddy comedy with heart, humor and a lot of exposed parts.

The Warner's polished and spirited production -- directed by **Julian Krom** with a neat balance of sentiment, swagger and sex -- proves this show is one of the most entertaining musicals Broadway ever produced.

Adapted from the 1997 English film of the same name -- but switching the scene from the English midlands to Buffalo -- playwright **Terrence McNally** and composer **David Yazbek** fashioned a show that works equally well as a comedy and a musical.

If there's a fly in the ointment, it was with Tony Award voters who ignored "Monty" in favor the over-hyped and less satisfying "The Producers." Productions such as the one Krom has fashioned proves that right eventually wins out.

When unemployed and financially strapped Jerry Lukowski (**Justin Boudreau**) and his pal **Dave Bukatinsky** (John Quinn) discover their wives -- and practically all the other wives in Buffalo -- are willing to pay big money to see male strippers, the Chippendales, a light bulb goes on in Jerry's head.

Why wouldn't Buffalo ladies pay to see "real" men take it off! It's not enough that Jerry and Dave can't dance; there are also aesthetic problems like Dave's waistline and the possibility of "under endowment."

The fear of losing custody of his son, Nathan (nicely played by Nolan Cummings), for failure to pay child support to his ex-wife, Pam (**Stephanie Jenkins**), is the spur that prods Jerry on.

They enlist the suicidal Malcolm (Allen Burton) in their local stripper troupe, then Harold (**Jonathan Ross**), a factory boss who hasn't had the guts to tell his adoring but materialistic wife, Vicki (**Juliette Garrison Koch**), he's been laid off.

Yazbek's score does an excellent job of letting us have fun at the expense of the men, but never without compassion. The opening "Scrap" sums up how most of the idle men see themselves, while "Man" sees Jerry and Dave Jerry defending, and reaffirming, their masculinity.



Boudreau and Quinn, as mismatched but solid friends, deliver nuanced performances throughout. The songs are funny, full of bounce, character true and emotionally revealing.

The women in the cast, in addition to the very able and vocally strong Jenkins and Koch, include [Jessica Ferraday](#) as Dave's loving wife, [Marianne Greaves](#), [Janice Gabriel](#) and [Katie Brunetto](#), who supply some brassy, upstate strut.

Making an attempt to steal the show, and almost succeeding, are [Mensah Robinson](#) as the arthritic black man "Horse" and [Maureen McBride](#) as [Jeanette Burmeister](#), a tough old show-business broad who becomes the guys' rehearsal pianist.

Robinson gets cheers for the randy "Big Black Man," a song that would have been banned in Boston, and McBride makes like [Sophie Tucker](#) in "Jeanette's Showbiz Number."

Dan O'Brien gets laughs as [Ethan Girard](#), a young fellow with an obsession to repeat [Donald O'Connor's](#) run-up-the-wall number from "Singin' in the Rain." Ouch! That hurts!

There are some affecting ballads, particularly "Breeze Off the River" and "You Walk With Me." "Walk" is featured in a somber funeral scene that seems out of place even though it solidifies an unexpected relationship that develops between two of the men.

Guys in the audience will identify with the macho jitters about being undressed in front of their buddies, and there are plenty of laughs as this ragtag bunch of strippers face their fears and learn to band together for the common cause.

The performances are all excellent, and the choreography of [Roxie Quinn](#) wisely lets the dancers straddle the line between would-be-hoofers and Fred Astaires.

You'll have a good time at this show even when you find yourself blushing. Language and adult content make it inappropriate for youngsters, but don't forego bringing your prim aunt. She'll probably have a ball.

Refinance Now at 4.0% Fixed

\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo. Free. No obligation.
MortgageRefinance

Obama Urges Homeowners to Refinance

Rates Hit 3.62% APR!
SeeRefinanceRates

Ads by Yahoo!