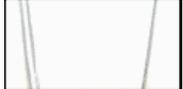


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Some Theatre Company's 'Little Shop of Horrors' a unique experience

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A color (yes, COLOR) photo from Some Theatre Company's "Little Shop of Horrors." (photo courtesy STC/Elaine Bard)

ORONO - Some Theatre Company is celebrating its third birthday with a memorable performance of the musical "Little Shop of Horrors" - with book and lyrics

by Howard Ashman and music by Alan Menken - at the Keith Anderson Community Center in Orono. STC's Elaine Bard directed the production.

Life is not so good for Mr. Mushnik (Shayne Bither) and the meek Seymour Krelborn (Paul Allen). The rundown Mushnik Flower Shop is at first brightened only by the presence of the flower shop worker Audrey (Stacy Laflin) - literally.

During Act I the set was designed in grayscale and the cast was dressed accordingly - a style Some Theatre Company has been known to do in the past. By using grayscale, Bard successfully captures the hopelessness and sadness of life in Skid Row - not least than with the musical number "Skid Row (Downtown)."

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In one of the most visually striking moments, Audrey enters the drab flower shop in full color. Light blonde hair, dark red nail polish, wearing a black dress with red roses and white polka dots underneath a tacky cheetah print overcoat - Audrey effortlessly warms up the stage amidst the hopeless gray environment and characters. Like a rose, Audrey is strikingly beautiful, but delicate and vulnerable - easily stepped on.

And stepped on, she is. Ken Lozier steals the show with his convincing take on abusive dentist (and Audrey's boyfriend) Orin Scrivello. This time around, Orin is a little bit different. During "Dentist!" Orin rips open his scrubs to proudly reveal a bright-red fishnet undershirt. Constantly wasted on nitrous oxide, Orin Scrivello, D.D.S. is especially sexual and his performance is chock full of in-your-face innuendo. The comedic aspects of Orin are easy to distinguish from the abusive aspects, which is a credit to Lozier.

Lozier pulls it off because his acting was just so believable. His movement was fast, jittery, and unpredictable. His facial expressions nailed it. With a sinister grin, Orin's eyes slowly rolled from side to the other and his hands ran down his body as he was lost in his own sadistic thoughts.

There were a few songs that particularly stood out. "Dentist!" was one. "Feed Me (Git it)" is another. Audrey II first appeared as a cute little green puppet and evolved into a combination of plant and human, played with power and sass by Jason Wilkes. During "Feed Me (Git it)," Audrey II convinces Seymour to kill Orin and to feed Orin to him, easily convincing the shy clerk to do his bidding. From that point on, you could feel the power the plant held over Seymour, despite the fact that it is Audrey II who depended on Seymour to survive.

(Note: Of all the characters in the play, Audrey II drew the biggest audience reaction - and for good reason. Audrey II's big reveal in Act I was shocking, funny, and most of all fitting with the character choices perfectly. But no spoilers here - you'll have to go see for yourself. Just know that the audience approved; there were plenty of gasps and laughs ... and a few cat-call whistles.)

It was clear that "Dentist!" and "Feed Me (Git it)" were crowd favorites, but your mileage may vary - my personal favorite musical performances included "Skid Row (Downtown)," "The Meek Shall Inherit," and the company-wide finale. Musically, the entire cast struck all the right notes, blending wonderfully and capturing the spirits of each song.

And of course, the grayscale. The striking look was successful because it helped accentuate the show's wild swings between bleakness and bounty. It exaggerated Audrey's beauty and vulnerability and highlighted the degree by which the Mushnik flower shop changed. That - plus outstanding performances (from Lozier and Wilkes in particular) - really transported the play from good to great.

Some Theatre Company's "Little Shop of Horrors" sounds great and it looks great - a fun, unconventional night at the theater.

Just remember - don't feed the plants!

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