

Elf Jr.

Waterville Playshop's *Elf Jr.* Review

BY EMILY REMAKLUS

When a group of kids come onstage dressed as elves, even Scrooge would have a difficult time not smiling. *Elf Jr.* was charming, sweet, and an excellent reminder to keep the Christmas spirit alive year round.

A musical focused on Christmas may seem out of place for a June day; however, during the hour long production I completely forgot that it was an 85-degree evening in Ohio, and was so pleased to be transported to New York City in December.

The production required many scene changes, and each transition was seamless and quick. It was apparent that there was a clear communication between the lighting booth and the set crew throughout the performance, which lead to wonderful transitions between scenes.

The sound was overall pretty good, with the exception of Santa's mic during Act 1 which was having some difficulties. However, the rest of the show went without any major sound issues. I enjoyed the sound effect of the paper shredder when Buddy the Elf was making snow for the office. It added a great amount of comedy to that particular scene.

Costuming for the production was very well done. Buddy's yellow pants and Christmas sweater were particularly funny, and reflected his bright and cheerful personality. Each character's costume highlighted their individuality nicely.

The production had many wonderful moments that left the audience laughing and smiling. The first scene was really enjoyable with the little elves and Buddy. The height contrast made it evident that Buddy was not like the other elves. Director Shauna Newbold's choice to have Buddy kneel next to the standing elves was very funny. The elves were dedicated to their roles and did a nice job staying in character while onstage, but not distracting from Buddy's solo.

Also at the beginning of the play, I was impressed with Divya Shetty's performance of Charlie, the elf shop manager; she was genuine and impressive in the fact that she was able to create a type of authority beyond her age.

Ellie Goodwin's performance as the Macy's Manager was also impressive. She performed the role with an air of confidence that made it very believable that she was a much older.

Another actor that grabbed my attention was Emma Parrish as Deb. Her facial expressions were spot on, and I really enjoyed her delivery of lines. She fully embodied the role and created a very likeable character.

The Hobbs family brought some beautiful vocals to their scenes, and each actor was articulate and nicely paced in their delivery of lines. I think the only suggestion I would like to offer would be to look at the chemistry and overall relationship of the family. There was one moment where Belle Johnson (Emily Hobbs) put her hand on her son's shoulder, and it was so sweet. I would have liked to see more moments like that.

The relationship between Abby Fitch (Jovie) and Weston Matlow (Buddy) was especially endearing. The two actors did a wonderful job with their roles. Weston's energy throughout the production was perfect for Buddy, but what I really enjoyed was seeing how he handled the moments where Buddy was not happy. Weston kept the energy, but adapted it and created some very powerful and emotional moments. Abby's Jovie was a perfect contrast to Weston's Buddy, and her solos were beautifully performed.

Every actor involved in this production was so energetic and excited, and that energy was radiated into the audience. I always enjoy watching the actors towards the back of the stage to see if they are staying in character and maintaining energy throughout the production, and I was happy to see that every actor was fully invested in their role. This group of kids did a fantastic job with the production, and it was clear they were having a great time with this show.