



Adelaide Theatre Guide

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Supporting live theatre in South Australia

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ELTON JOHN AND TIM RICE'S AIDA

The Hills Musical Company Inc.

Stirling Community Theatre

Until 20 May

Review by Paige Mulholland

Adelaidians have been waiting for 17 years for Elton John and Tim Rice's "Aida" to come to Adelaide, and will certainly get their fix with The Hills Musical Company's interpretation despite some confusing choreography and costume choices. Featuring talented leads, an exciting storyline, and a well-designed set, "Aida" is a very enjoyable night at the theatre.

Aida is a Nubian princess caught and taken into slavery by the Egyptians. Refusing to go quietly into a life of servitude, she catches the attention of the Egyptian captain Radames, who is betrothed to the Egyptian princess Amneris. The show follows the three characters as they wrestle with conflicting emotions and loyalties in a time of war between Nubia and Egypt.

Rebecca Raymond, playing the title character, was undoubtedly the standout of the show. Her performance was emotive and brave, and her earthy, powerful vocals were a perfect fit for Aida. Lindsay Prodea was also an excellent choice for Radames; although some higher notes in the part seemed to be a struggle, Prodea overall had strong pitch and played Radames with sensitivity and an excellent chemistry with Raymond. Tegan Gully skilfully captures Amneris' transformation from shallowness to bravery, and, despite a few missed notes and awkward movements, Chris Eaton plays the power-hungry Zoser with commitment and works very well with Prodea. The ensemble were more of a mixed bag – some were obviously well-rehearsed and in character, and others seemed more unsure.

The choreography had some strong moments, particularly when performed by the small dance group, but overall seemed unsuited to the skillset of the performers. Particularly for the male chorus who seemed uncomfortable with dance, it would have been more effective to pare back the choreography, or even to omit it in places. Some of the scenes that were purely orchestral might have been better used for character development rather than dance breaks; for example, in this production, Aida's transition from hating Radames to freely declaring her love for him seems quite jarring, but if we had seen a montage of stolen glances and heated moments as the two went about their daily activities instead of a strained dance break in between these two moments, the change may have felt more believable.

The set was simple and effective, displaying the strong craftsmanship often displayed in The Hills Musical Company's sets and props. The backdrop of the pyramid never felt out of place, and was a constant reminder of the power and influence of the Egyptian empire at the time.

The costumes, however, were not as consistent or as effective. Some costumes, such as the robe worn by Aida for the majority of the play and the peasant clothing worn by the ensemble, seems apt – possibly not historically accurate, but timeless enough to be believable. But some of the elaborate dresses worn by the handmaidens were obviously from the 1980s and 1990s, so much so that it was difficult to focus on anything else. Although the song in this scene is about the princess's love for fashion and glamour, it seems that for the backup singers and dancers, simple robes or togas with a colourful or sparkly sash might have been more appropriate.



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Clumsy dance and out-of-place costumes aside, "Aida" certainly entertained the audience and captured their interest. Backed by a strong orchestra and creative team, it is clear that the show has been a labour of love for cast and crew.