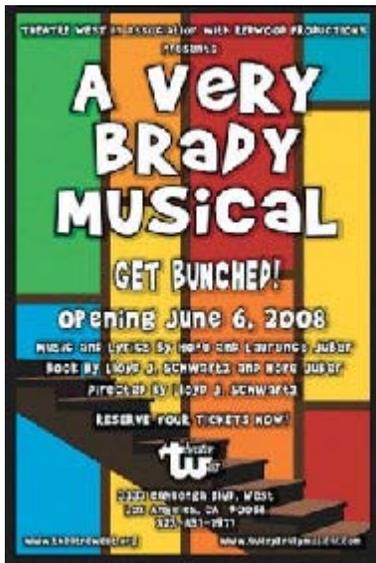




They're Baaaaack. The Brady Musical Lands in LA.

**JUBER -- SCHWARTZ
A VERY BRADY MUSICAL
THEATRE WEST, LOS ANGELES
JUNE 21, 2008**



By: Carol Jean Delmar

“A Very Brady Musical” is meant to be a silly satirical romp and musical adaptation for the die-hard devoted audience of the ‘70s TV series “The Brady Bunch,” and it is, but it also has the potential to bring in a new younger breed of followers. The current production is rough around the edges, with budding but not yet blooming young actor-singer-dancers performing on a stark but colorful cost-effective set to piped-in music. The music and lyrics aren’t great, as of yet, although extremely promising, and the show

needs more finish. But this rough draft of a Broadway musical has much potential for the real thing. It's sort of like on the first out-of-town run at Theatre West in Los Angeles. But with some fine-tuning, rewriting and recasting, there is GREAT potential here for a major success. So don't abandon the ship. It isn't the Titanic.

The audience ate it up upon hearing the original "Brady Bunch Theme," but it wasn't until Barry Williams took a bow – the original Greg on the TV series -- that the audience went wild. That's when I realized that this legendary television show still has major impact. Maybe we yearn to go back to the squeaky-clean image that the family unit once had. Maybe we're only laughing now because we know that it never existed. Could this Brady clan be the "real" Brady bunch -- where mom and pop can't wait for a little nookie, and the kids try to raise money for marriage counseling for them, but end up in the slammer instead?

Those are the elements that need fine-tuning. Right now the play is a bunch of vignettes that are no more than simply written, choreographed improv with plastic one-dimensional characterizations. That's why we yearn for Florence Henderson. She WAS Carol Brady. Barbara Mallory is a weak link in this show while Florence Henderson was the strongest link in the original. Young men were falling in love with her; young girls were yearning for a mother just like her. And she could even sing. I mean, wow, could she sing. More dialogue, dance and music should be written for this Carol Brady, and she should be cast with someone musically empowered. We should fall in love with her, and she should be able to sing like Florence Henderson could, even though the television Carol Brady didn't have to.

"A Very Brady Musical" is currently a skeleton of a production with much potential. The characters need to be better developed so that they become real, like Robert Reed's Mike Brady and Maureen McCormick's Marcia, while still keeping a satirical-burlesque style, if that's possible. The vignettes need to be expanded upon with more dialogue and bigger-than-life performances. And the revolving sets need to be more innovative, possibly in a larger theater. The songs are catchy with enjoyable melodies, and some of the lyrics are hysterical, like the sexy pickle and jar innuendo. Composers with the ability to write lasting melodies bode well with audiences and are hard to come by. Hope and Laurence Juber are on the right track. But the show should become more than just a few skits down memory lane. The Jubers and writer-director Lloyd J. Schwartz have the talent.

As for the cast: the young actors show much promise, but they aren't there yet. The best in the cast on the night I saw the show was probably Kathy Garrick singing Alice's rendition of "My Special Recipe," although no one can fill the shoes of Ann B. Davis, I fear. Elliot Kevin Schwartz (Greg) was also a standout due to his onstage ease and likeability as he and the kids sang about Greg's Woody. John Cygan's Mike was a deadpan character. In fact, he and Carol reminded me more of Al and Peggy Bundy in "Married . . . with Children" than they did of Carol and Mike Brady. Kelly Stables' Cindy could clearly dance but had trouble with high notes. Laura Marion's Jan was vivacious and vibrant; we fell in love with her "Totally Useless." Adam Conger's Bobby

seemed a little too old, which was probably because he was trying so hard to appear young. Mary Garripoli didn't come into her own until she became Mrs. Fananigan. Erin Holt's Marcia was loveable, just insecure. Selah Victor's Destiny and Bubbles were caricatures, not characters, and she along with the other women could use vocal lessons to sing with one voice from bottom to top. Belting with chest voice doesn't work as you go up the scale. There is a natural break, and something has to give. A relaxed throat, singing with support and resonance, and learning to mix head with chest is the key to vocal longevity.

The lines between opera and musical theater are becoming more blurred lately – not the lines between the two genres, but the lines between the performers and artists who perform in them. Once on casting calls in New York, the actors who sing and the singers who act compete. That's why actors who sing have to perfect their vocal technique and dancing, and singers who act have to be in command of their movement and emotions.

“A Very Brady Musical” is a work in progress with great potential. There is an audience for it, and there is every indication that it should and could become noteworthy and significant. The team is there: Sherwood and Lloyd Schwartz, the originators of “The Brady Bunch,” and Hope and Laurence Juber. All I can say is: “Make it spectacular.”

Music and Lyrics: Hope and Laurence Juber; Theme by Sherwood Schwartz and Frank De Vol.

Book: Lloyd Schwartz and Hope Juber

Director: Lloyd J. Schwartz

Music Director: Laurence Juber

Executive Producer: Sherwood Schwartz

Produced by Matthew Hoffman, Bonnie Kalisher, David Johnson

Associate Producer: Barbara Mallory

Set Design: Joseph M. Altadonna, Richard De Siato, Daniel Keough

Lighting Design: Yancey Dunham

Sound Design: David P. Johnson

Choreographer, Paul Denniston

Costumes: Diana Marion