



'Forbidden' is certainly a fitting adjective for Roxy's Downtown current production entitled **Forbidden Broadway**. If you simply look up the word 'forbidden' in the dictionary, you will find its meaning to be prohibited, not allowed or even banned. It's a clever little title to describe this Off-Broadway parody rated PG-13 which spoofs many lyrics and shows such as Mamma Mia, Cats, and even Hairspray which would send original playwrights and performing artists rolling in their graves with laughter. Opening originally in 1982 by parodist **Gerard Alessandrini**, the show has gone under many revisions to include even newer musicals. Starring Julia Faust, John Keckeisen, Seth Knowles, **Shaun-Michael Morse**, **Patty Reeder**, and Christine Tasheff, **Forbidden Broadway** runs from now until August 24 at the 1930s cabaret venue in downtown Wichita.

Directed by artistic director Rick Bumgardner, **Forbidden Broadway** does not have much of a plot. The format is pretty much one satire after the next, which can be an appreciated break from the previous, outstanding drama Love! Valour! Compassion! It does, however, still

showcase the talents of Bumgardner's team from technical crew to cast with two acts and an intermission; running time is under two hours. With audience participation and accurate impersonations, **Forbidden Broadway** is a cheaper alternative to paying for a ticket else

The nice thing about the playbill is it lists song and dance numbers so you can easily follow along which is a wonderful improvement. The cast has certainly strong moments while being committed to the comedy. For example, Christine Tasheff imitated **Carol Channing** and Barbara Streisand perfectly. You can see and hear the similarities. Channing, of course, passed away earlier this year in January. Shaun **Michael Morse**'s impersonation of **Mandy Patinkin** is remarkable as well as having the opportunity to sing a number called 'Somewhat Overindulgent' mocking the star's Bari tenor sound and style to the beloved tune 'Over the Rainbow' earning Morse big applause. Morse further showcases his vocals during the Les Misérables section singing 'It's Too High' poking fun at showtune 'Bring Him Home' and the abilities required for that ballad. John Keckeisen delivers his turn with a hoax on The Phantom of the Opera along with **Patty Reeder** as **Ethel Merman**. Keckeisen's vocals fit perfectly for the haunting melody. Reeder is hilarious as Merman and as other various Broadway veterans including **Gwen Verdon**, **Chita Rivera** and **Liza Minnelli**. Minnelli was my favorite displaying Reeder's powerful belt. Julia Faust and Seth Knowles have a wonderful duet from Spamalot called 'The Song They Stole from Us' which is a take on the actual song 'The Song That Goes Like This.' Focus on the costumes during this number, particularly Faust's, which were designed by Dora Arbuckle. As an ensemble there are shining instances especially at the top of act one with title song '**Forbidden Broadway**.' Another chorus song worth listening to is 'Ambition' sung to the refrain of 'Tradition' from Fiddler on the Roof. It has funny, re-written lyrics about Wichita and why so many actors have stuck around. Faust shows her belting voice here. The final song 'What I Did for Laughs' is heart-warming and sentimentally delivered with truth, depth and believability from the show A Chorus Line.

Properties were quite fun and executed by Rockford University student Katie Hayes. **Arthur Reese** works his magic again as lighting designer ever paying reverence to emotion and detail. Choreography was simple but effective. Kyle Vespestad was responsible for this feat. Musical direction was done by Andrew Bowers with assistance from vocal coach and Broadway veteran herself **Karla Burns**, who has a very impressive resume. Ben Balleau accompanied. Sound and set were designed by resident technical director Scott Olney. Sound, especially, showed advancement since most lyrics were able to be heard and understood. The set was a simple box set with two-lit columns that could change in color while vibrant-red drywall had logos from Roxy's and **Forbidden Broadway** painted on them. My only complaint is a crew member brought out a chair right at the top of the show when an unused actor could have placed it center stage. With so many costume changes and other duties for the actors, this may not have been possible.

Grab your scooter, go to Roxy's Downtown and come along and listen to the lullaby of **Forbidden Broadway**. It will only be a matter of time before those will be forbidden, too.