

REVIEW: NOMADS: A CHORUS LINE

With music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Edward Kleban, and book by James Kirkwood, Jr. and Nicholas Dante, *A Chorus Line* is about dancers auditioning for a chorus line. Apparently the authors devised the book from conversations with actors so they created the character of the director, Zach (**Andy Ward**), who wants to know more about each dancer and calls them out one by one to tell their stories. They sing, dance, share personal anecdotes and give us a taste of the desperation, anxiety and hope that dancers feel at an audition.

Gail Baker's scenic design placed a row of mirrors towards the back of the stage as if in a dance studio. The only set changes were performed by removing the mirrors to leave a gauze backdrop and adjusting pools of light to distinguish between various spaces — provided by **Allan Baxter's** lighting design.

The show was obviously thoroughly rehearsed and there was certainly plenty of energy on stage. From the starting number “I Hope I Get It” to the final reprise of the classic “One,” the entire company is on stage for the better half of the show. This musical demands much of the actors/dancers since they are standing on a bare stage and, instead of interacting with each other, in the main they are speaking more or less directly to the audience.

In this cast of rising stars everyone gets a chance to shine, and so they did both as a unit and individually; but there were two or three standout performers. **Ebony Chamberlain-King's** Diana, who sings two of the show's best songs (“Nothing” and “What I Did for Love”), was well done and this actress is undeniably very talented. Also undeniably talented is **Josh Jenkins** (Paul), who has perhaps the most heartbreaking story. When he lifted the lid on Paul's emotions he was both convincing and captivating. A second ‘back story’ concerns Cassie, beautifully played by **Laura Jolley** a starlet whose career has plummeted.

However, as a show *A Chorus Line* only takes off vocally and choreographically in the ensemble numbers when it becomes rousing. The choreography by **Jessica Clifford** and **Andy Thorpe** (who also gave a great performance as Larry the Choreographer) was superb and was executed faultlessly by the cast. The musicians, under musical director **Mark Aldous**, were first-rate although slightly overpowering in some of the numbers that had dialogue within the song.

In her programme note, director Gail Baker says “*A Chorus Line* is a bit of a Marmite show, you either love it or hate it”. She also quoted a member of the audience at the original West End production who was overheard to say ‘This isn't a show, it's an audition, or something!’ I agree with both sentiments. I have never much liked Marmite but you could not really fault this first-class production.

Julie Petrucci
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