

[theatre]

Seaside Barn Does 'Hairspray' w/ Style

When I saw Theatre by the Sea's production of *Hairspray*, I was having a great day.

But, if I had been having a really bad day, this show would have quickly lifted my spirits. In fact, for anyone who needs a lift, I recommend not calling your doctor, but instead going immediately to the next



Robert Barossi

performance of this show. You're guaranteed to leave with a smile on your face.

Hairspray has had a number of incarnations, ever since writer-director John Waters first brought it to movie theatres in 1988. The film gained a cult following and was made into a musical in 2002, a show which won eight Tony's, including Best Musical. In 2007, the show ended up back at the

cinema with the release of a movie version of the musical.

Set in 1962, *Hairspray* centers around Tracy Turnblad, a full-figured teen who dreams of dancing on The Corny Collins Show, a popular American Bandstand-type dance show in her home city of Baltimore. The show is populated by beautiful, thin teens, some of whom don't believe Tracy belongs there. Tracy gets on the show and then takes her fight to an even bigger goal, the integration of The Corny Collins Show.

The role of Tracy, originated by Ricki Lake in the first movie version, is played here by the fantastic Erin McCracken. Her enthusiasm is so real and so infectious, the audience can't help but fall in love with her and cheer for her as she fights for truth, justice and the heart of the boy she loves. She keeps the energy up from the first moment we see her until her final bow.

While McCracken has seemingly endless energy, every one of her cast mates meets the challenge of keeping up with her. Having a cast this uniformly fabulous and ridiculously talented all on one stage seems almost unfair.

I will, though, mention just a few who are especially worthy. Local actor Tom Gleadow plays Tracy's plus-sized mother, Edna Turnblad, extremely well. The role traditionally has been played by a male actor and Gleadow shines, demonstrating his singing abilities and comic timing. Alexa Shanahan performs the role of Tracy's best friend, Penny, brilliantly. This talented young actress, currently a college sophomore, nails the role and, for my money, got the show's biggest laughs. Jay Leland Krottinger as Corny Collins, the suave dance show host, Yvette Monique Clark as Motormouth Maybelle, an African-American D.J. who



helps Tracy fight for integration, and Zach Trimmer as Link, Tracy's love interest and a budding singing star, are all marvelous in their own way.

The entire cast deserves credit for this impeccably executed production, along with Director and Choreographer Russell Garrett and the technical team. Bert Scott's set design is perfect for the Theatre by the Sea space and what it can do. Marcia Zammarelli's costumes are won-

derful, bright and colorful period pieces. The show is big, bright and bold, in all the best ways possible. The song at the show's end is right, you can't stop the beat, and you'll likely keep singing it long after the show's over.

Hairspray, performed at Theatre by the Sea, Card's Pond Road in Matunuck, thru Aug 13. Visit www.theatrebythesea.com