

# Sassy and entertaining

*'Chicago' will really heat up your summer night*

By **Jeanné McCartin**

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"Chicago" is deliciously dark, smartly funny, and sizzling with talent. This one really heats up the summer. The short of the script is it's about two murderesses, fleeting fame, a flimflam lawyer and fickle public.

The production is smashing, starting with talent selection, moving on to deft direction and choreography (based on Bob Fosse's original) by Brian Swasey and an exciting, skilled band, directed by Catherine York.

Swasey has a spirited vision, created a tight package, landed the right talent and used it well. He keeps it moving at an exciting clip from start to finish.

Jessi Trauth personifies Roxie. She's petite and cute, and her characterization large and brash. Trauth, who dazzles on stage, creates a magnificent mix of sweet, manipulative, wily and dumber than a box of rocks. Trauth's puppet performance with lawyer Billy Flynn is a standout, in a show with numerous sensational moments. It's a beautifully animated ballet of sorts, exquisitely executed — like her entire performance.

Trauth's vocals are not strong, but they are sweet and able, and well supplemented by the outstanding performance. She's also a heck of a hooper, delightfully fluid.

Christine Dulong has become a musical storyteller's perfect tool. Her powerful, clear, colored voice is enthralling. She moves with ease between styles and octaves; wherever she goes vocally, so goes the audience. Dulong is an equally skilled actress; her Velma savvy, shameless, tough and authentic. It's a performance to savor.

Ashley Kelley is Mama the Matron. As fans expect she takes everything the character has to give, adds some extra — including loaded vocals — and serves it up on a silver platter. It's a bright and lively portrayal.

Michael Karraker channels Billy Flynn with a pleasingly polished execution. His rich, warm voice grabs your attention, whether speaking or wooing with song. His animation is commanding, a perfect blend of charm, arrogance, and "greazy."

Delta Miles nearly does the unthinkable, ripping the show out from the rest with her exquisite Mary Sunshine. Everything about the meticulously nuanced performances grabs you. The showstopping moment is an earth-shattering delivery of "A Little Bit of Good." Takes you a few minutes to recover.

Jamie Bradley, as the understated Amos Hart, has created a well-crafted sad-sack character, and Jeremy Abram is spot on as the Master of Ceremonies.

The dynamic ensemble truly helps make this show come alive, Right on acting, real smart hoofing.

Kudos to Tommy Labanaris for costume design, Erik D. Diaz for set design and Michael Clark Wonson for lighting. "Chicago" is definitely "all that jazz;" razzamatazz fun, sass and pure entertainment — and most definitely worth your discretionary time.