

CATS



Cats is a song and dance show performed by cats. However, in this reimagining of the production instead of a cluster of cats telling their stories it is a team of story tellers telling the tales of cats. It is a homage to TS Eliot. The author that wrote *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, which Andrew Lloyd Webber uses as a basis for the musical.

The 2023 graduating musical theatre group from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, are a strong cast that perform an entertaining and riveting version of this production. When this cast sings together they are like a choir of cat angels with powerful and resonating voices.

Under the direction of Crispin Taylor and his production team, this new imagining is, dare I say it, more entertaining and engaging than the ninety-five million dollar 2019 movie. Taylor engages strong vaudeville themes throughout this production.

The dance sequences, choreographed by Jayne Smeulders, are slick and performed with precision. As this is a recalling of the cat tales, Smeulders is able to choreograph numbers that are less about how a cat moves, and more about allowing the cast to showcase their various strengths and genres of dance.

The cheeky Rum Tum Tugger was played by Patrick Friedlander. Friedlander cartwheeled and performed on a sofa thrusting his hips to perform a playful, fun and sexy version of *The Rum Tum Tugger*. He continued his cheeky playfulness throughout the performance.

Curtis Kossart and Emily Lambert as Mungojerrie and Rumpleteaser, perform a true old fashioned vaudevillian number. It is a fun performance from start to finish as they are pulled from the stage with coat hooks.

Marcus Frost as Skimbleshanks the railway cat's performance is thoroughly entertaining and hilariously camp. He sashayed and danced around the stage in a scene reminiscent of a *Little Britain* sketch.

Grace Alston and Hanna Harvey as Bombalurina and Demeter perform a sensual number on top of a grand piano as four male cast members perform around them.

Genevieve Goldman's version of *Memory*, had me in goosebumps. Regarded as one of the toughest songs to sing, I have to admit, I was worried, but Goldman sung it with a perfection that reached a climatic crescendo.

The only disappointment was the short run of the production. One can only imagine what Taylor could have done with the film's budget. When does it open on Broadway?

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Geoff Gibbs Theatre – WAAPA, 2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawler

Season: 8 – 14 September 2023

Information: www.waapa.ecu.edu.au

Image: CATS – photo by Stephen Heath Photography

Review: Craig Dalglish

26
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