
Metropolis goes for everything in resplendent production of classic ‘Anything Goes’

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By Erin Fleming

In the mood for a classic, American musical with campy humor, peppy tap numbers and a **Cole Porter** score that’s “Easy to Love?”

Chances are you’ll get quite a kick out of *Anything Goes*, performed with morale-lifting exuberance at Metropolis by a cast of 25 belters, hoofers and comedians and a toast-worthy six-piece band under the musical direction of **Kenneth McMullen**.

The *oft-revised script* by **P.G. Wodehouse, Guy Bolton, Howard Crouse, John Weidman** and others has been distilled down to a cocktail of daffy plots featuring bubbly romances, fizzy intrigues and other intoxicatingly implausible nautical hi-jinks—all aboard an ocean liner traveling from New York to England with a passenger list of socialites, missionaries, gangsters and nightclub entertainers.



Many of the original Depression-era attitudes of high society which may be deemed insensitive or antiquated by today's standards have been lovingly excised from the dialogue. Director **Robin M. Hughes** preserves just enough of the era-appropriate tensions between social classes, ages and genders for the silliness to work. And the silliness provides just enough of a framework to get us from one Porter standard to the other, which include "I Get A Kick Out of You," "Easy to Love," "Friendship," "It's De-lovely," "You're the Top," "All Through the Night" and "Blow, Gabriel, Blow."

As a surviving artifact of a Broadway Gone By, what elevates *Anything Goes* above its peers of escapist fun is the curious timelessness of Porter's witty, topical lyrics and infectious melodies. Here, in the hands of Hughes and McMullen, the ensemble lifts each tune up until it shines like the stars that sparkle in the night sky of **Christopher Rhoton's** impressively enchanting set. At times enhanced by **Michael Wagner's** romantic lighting, or by **Christie Kerr's** snappy choreography, these wonderful renditions of Porter's songs are a tonic to cynicism and weariness.



Costume Designer **Rachel S. Parent** adds elegance and dazzle with period-inspired costumes that evoke the sophisticated glamour of the 1930s, cladding each performer perfectly in the style, color or flounce most appropriate to their character. The hellfire-and-brimstone-meets-burlesque-dresses worn by Reno and the Angels in "Blow, Gabriel, Blow," are especially stunning.

The cast dives in joyfully, fully committing to the vintage camp and stylistic tropes of the piece, many of them going for broke with highly entertaining, over-the-top comic performances, such as scene stealers **Mark Ponatelli** and **Maddie Dorsey** as Public Enemy #13 Moonface Martin and sassy moll Erma Latour, and **Connor Murray** as the Lord Evelyn Oakley. **Nancy Greco** (Evangeline Harcourt), **Jim Heatherly** (Elisha Whitney), **Chih-Jou Cheng** (Luke), and **Peter Ruger** (John), have a lot

of fun with their character roles. **Brandy Miller** (Hope Harcourt), **Kaity Paschetto** (Reno Sweeney) and **Justice Good** (Billy Crocker) are vocal stand-outs among a great-sounding ensemble.



Paschetto makes up for some early-in-the-run acting stiffness with consistently sleek and sultry dancing, leading the whole gang in the titular “Anything Goes” —a spectacular nine-minute tap number closing the first act. If anything, this production could use more of the bigger dance numbers to better showcase the footwork of ensemble players like **Wade Tischhauser** (Quartet 4), **Michael M.Ashford**(Purser) and **Jordan Beyeler** (who was also so good in *The Flower of Hawaii* at Folks Operetta earlier this year!). Beyeler, along with the other Angels **Anastasia Arnold** (Angel/Virtue), **Jessica Miret Garcia** (Angel/Charity) and **Sara Haverty** (Angel/Purity) are fun to watch and listen to throughout, as are the Sailor Quartet, made up of **Jon Parker Jackson** (*Quartet 1, Fred*), **Alexander Watson** (*Quartet 2, Rev. Henry Dobson*), **Bryan J. Wlas** (*Quartet 3, Captain*) and **Wade Tischhauser** (*Quartet 4*). Ponatelli’s “Be Like The Bluebird” and Dorsey’s “Buddie Beware” are highlights of the second act.



Anything Goes, although full of innuendo, is family friendly and sails along at a great clip, despite running over two hours with intermission. So,

If witty tunes you like
If pretty moons you like
If zany plots you like
On any yachts you like
If sweet romance you like
If gleeful dance you like
This is one of those shows

Your pants for sure will be hot for this
You're gonna leave Metropolis
Tapping your toes
Anything goes.

Metropolis Performing Arts Center presents "Anything Goes" through November 2 at 111 W Campbell St, Arlington Heights. More information and tickets are available [here](#).

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