

## Theater: 'Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical'

DARRYL GANGLOFF

# Good, Evil and Terrific Theater

There's a lesson here: "Each man you meet in the street isn't one man but two!" That's from a song in "Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical" at the Center for Performing Arts in Rhinebeck, NY.

Two actors take turns playing the lead, and I was in the audience for Joshua Patriarco's opening night. He alternates the role with Chris Vallone.

Patriarco was mesmerizing. Between his powerful voice and physical performance, he was totally convincing as the man who becomes a monster.

In an attempt to separate man's good from evil, Jekyll creates a formula and becomes the subject of his own experiment. As a result, he switches back and forth between Dr. Jekyll and the murderous Mr. Hyde.

That first transformation scene makes clear how perfect Patriarco is for this role. Up until this point in the musical, Jekyll is mild-mannered and soft-spoken. But when he drinks the formula, Patriarco writhes on the ground in pain before becoming Hyde, his face

twisted in a maniacal smile as his evil laugh and bellowing voice echo through the theater. His performance is so perfect, one wonders if he actually created Jekyll's formula for the show.

Also, right before the transformation, Patriarco shone during "This Is the Moment," which is the musical's most familiar song.

The rest of the cast does a wonderful job bringing 1880s London to life. Their voices complement each other during the ensemble pieces ("Murder, Murder" is a standout), and the choreography during all of these numbers is impressive.

Emily Woolever deserves a standing ovation for her role as Lucy Harris, the prostitute who develops feelings for Jekyll. Her voice is simply amazing, and she commands the stage whenever she's on it. Even when she's off it. During the "Bring On The Men" dance number, she walked up the aisle and gave a rose to a fellow. In fact, the audience becomes an extension of the stage many times, drawing the crowd even

further into this tragic story.

This cast is filled with many wonderful singers, but Victoria Howland as Emma Carew, Jekyll's fiancée, is especially fine. Her voice is crisp and clear, and she makes every song seem effortless. "In Her Eyes," her duet with Woolever, is fantastic.

The set, inspired by the Crystal Palace in Victo-

rian England, is minimalist and eloquent, giving all of the actors room to move. The lighting really draws audiences into the story, from a street lamp placed to cast shadows on Hyde's face to the colored lights that flashed during his transformation.

This is a very entertaining and accomplished production, thanks to the wide-ranging talents of

these performers and to Kevin Archambault's direction and choreography.

"Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical" is at the Center for Performing Arts at Rhinebeck on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. through July 28. Tickets are \$24 or \$26. Call 845-876-3080 or go to [www.centerforperformingarts.org](http://www.centerforperformingarts.org).

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