



Friday, December 11, 2009

## "Cinderella"

African American Shakespeare Company's "Cinderella": ★★★ BANG BANG

The African-American Shakespeare Company is a serious enterprise that turns out consistently high quality performances of the works of the Bard. But if you would ask the people who came last night to see the premiere of the company's annual run of "Cinderella," they would tell you they love this one most of all.

And what's not to love? The evil stepmother and stepsisters are so EVIL! Cinderella is so GORGEOUS! The Fairy Godmother is the grandma we all love to remember and everybody knows what happens when the slipper fits. Good trumps evil. The handsome prince carries his bride away to happy land.



But getting there is the best part and they're walking on somewhat different turf than Walt Disney ever did. In this decidedly Afro-centric version of the beloved fairy tale, the sisters are named Zonita and Shaniqua. The tall, skinny Zonita (Martin Grizell) and the shorter, even dumpier (if this is possible) Shaniqua (Abbie Rhone) steal the show every time their size 12s hit the stage. They ramp up the camp without mercy. What Zonita flashes the Prince's pages, when it is her turn to try on the slipper, was definitely not in Walt Disney's playbook.

Belinda Sullivan is the most soulful Fairy Godmother ever, and Melvina Hayes is suitably nasty as the stepmother. The men take second fiddle in this story, but Prince Charming (Detroit Dunwood) is charming enough. The man also knows how to pick the right woman, because Delina Brooks gives Cinderella a smile that can melt rocks.

The theater is filled with teenagers, and in a very nice way. They have come to see the show even though it isn't a cartoon and it is not dumbed down. Adults laugh as hard the kids. It's impossible not to love this Cinderella.

RATINGS: ★★★ BANG BANG

The San Francisco Theater Blog Awards Division awards "Cinderella" Three Stars with Two BANGLES OF PRAISE. African American Shakespeare has been performing this show for some years now and it's just getting better each year. One BANGLE is for that touching Nat Cole version of "Smile," and the other is for Belinda Sullivan, who not only knows good from evil but is smart enough to keep her granddaughters from fighting with each other...almost.

Everybody looks for a show to take the kids to that the parents will enjoy every bit as much as the kids. This is the one.

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"Cinderella"

African American Cultural Center

762 Fulton Street, San Francisco

Through Dec. 27

\$20-\$30

Posted by DAK at 10:29 PM