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TM Reviews

Frosty the Snow Manilow

Reviewed By: [Jonas Schwartz](#) · Dec 13, 2009 · Los Angeles

It will be a blazing hot day in the North Pole when the Troubadours can't come up with a laugh-out loud spoof, and with [Frosty the Snow Manilow](#), now at the Falcon Theatre, the temperature is happily well below zero.

Defiling the beloved Bass & Rankin television special, the irreverent show recasts the title character as a randy, irascible pile of snow who likes kids about as much as W.C. Fields. Once a magical hat animates the snowman, he joins a rabbit and a precocious little girl on a sojourn to the North Pole. Meanwhile, a selfish magician hopes to steal the hat that once belonged to him, and turn Frosty back into frozen water.

The much improvised script pokes fun at the holidays, children's programming, and even TV's *MacGyver*, while snarky topical jabs at Tiger Woods and the White House crashers produce loving groans from the audience. The Troubies delight in low humor and relish departing from the script, particularly when a laugh falls flat. They not only remove the fourth wall, they bulldoze it.

As the title suggests, the musical motif comes from the songs of Barry Manilow, and the Troubies parody such hits as "Mandy," "I Write The Songs," and "Ready to Take a Chance Again." (They save "Copacabana" for a big production number.) Knowing that the crooner began his career as a successful jingle writer, the cast also uses his popular tunes for McDonalds, Band-AIDS, and Budweiser as commercial breaks.

Paul C. Vogt is hilarious as he mocks the jovial title character. Feeling saddled with a bratty blonde girl and a rabbit that humps everything in sight, he appears ready to pound them at any moment. Lorin Shapiro delights as the charade-loving horny rabbit. Christine Lakin is wonderful as she flip-flops between an innocent eight-year-old and a knowing



Paul C. Vogt and Christine Lakin
in *Frosty The Snow Manilow*
(© Chelsea Sutton)

woman. Rick Batalla does a spot-on Barry Manilow, sounding so much like the crooner on his 1977 live album that you almost expect to find the real Manilow hiding behind a scrim like Debbie Reynolds in *Singin' in the Rain*.

Casting character actor Jack McGee as the narrator is an unfortunate choice. He's a bit too dry for the silliness of his role and only slightly unwrinkles to play a streetwise Santa Claus. And there's not enough of scene-stealer Beth Kennedy in this production. Entering the story late in the evening as the high-pitched Winter Warlock, she delights in her short scenes, with asides and friendly insults towards McGee and his roller-coaster career.

As in previous Troubadour shows, Eric Heinly's superlative band fills the theater with a toe-tapping sound. Choreographers Nadine Ellis and Ameenah Kaplan make even the squarest Manilow tunes feel hip. Sherry Santillano creates a fitting two-dimensional set and Sharon McGunigle has fun with the costumes, particularly the Winter Warlock, with two-foot long fingernails, a ghastly white face, and a shimmering long robe hiding stilts, all of which camouflages but never hinders the dynamic Kennedy.

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