

URBAN MUSICAL TOURS, LLC
PRESENTS



A PRODUCTION MEDIA GUIDE

EAST COAST PREMIERE ORIGINALLY PRODUCED AND PRESENTED BY THE DELAWARE THEATRE COMPANY

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FIRE ON THE BAYOU

2009 East Coast Premiere at the Delaware Theatre Company

"THRILLING MUSIC AND POWERFUL IMAGES" -*Delaware News Journal*

On the eve of the first Mardi Gras after Katrina, a homeless girl and her young brother wander the streets in search of their kinfolks. They tap dance on street corners to survive. Like a Greek chorus, a band of angels descend to rescue these youths, and ignite **FIRE ON THE BAYOU** into a mythical journey that will transport audiences to the jazz-filled streets of New Orleans - a colorful, vibrant city where the "Saints Go Marching In," and culture rises up from the streets. The audience is led on a musical journey seen through the lens of Katrina survivors. **FIRE ON THE BAYOU** features poignant original compositions, as well as, the music of some of New Orleans most celebrated icons, including Dr. John, The Neville Brothers, The Meters, Professor Longhair, Allen Toussaint, and countless others. **FIRE ON THE BAYOU** is one Mardi Gras you will never forget.



FIRE ON THE BAYOU

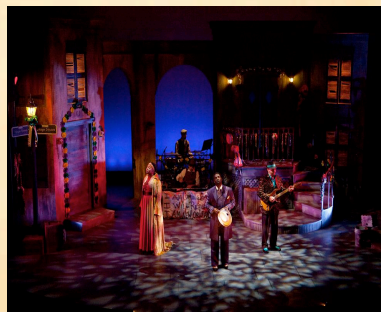
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FIRE ON THE BAYOU, **“SUPERBLY PERFORMED”** as it is, would by itself make a thoroughly engaging evening, but this **“WELL-CRAFTED THEATER PIECE”** also yields deeper, more substantial pleasures. It tells **“A VISUALLY COMPELLING AND MOVING STORY”** that is much more than the sum of its parts...**“A MEMORABLE THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE FOR YEARS TO COME.”** - Stages

FIRE ON THE BAYOU

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"THE SUPERB PERFORMANCES, and DAZZLING VISUAL ELEMENTS delighted the senses...During the iconic second line tune "Hey Pocky Way," **THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE ROSE AND DANCED** while waving their napkins." - Stages

FIRE ON THE BAYOU

2009 East Coast Premiere at the Delaware Theatre Company

By THOMAS BUTLER
Special to The News Journal

'Bayou' brings joy, despair, redemption

Kevin Ramsey's musical play doesn't draw the audience in quickly. The amalgam of New Orleans musical traditions and the horrors of Hurricane Katrina needs to build some momentum and allow the crowd to appreciate its theatrical conventions. Once the show does catch the audience with its driving rhythms and spectacular singing, the impact is powerful. The crowd was standing, swaying and shouting before "Fire on the Bayou" ended.

The show uses well known songs like "Walkin' to New Orleans," "St. James Infirmary" and "Iko Iko" to make the audience feel more comfortable with the characters and plot lines, then suddenly plunges the viewers into shocking vignettes about the Superdome and the failing hospitals and the looting and chaos and the feeling of being a refugee in one's own home town. But this is finally a play about struggle and redemption, not despair.

Set on the corner of Hope Street and Congo Square, the show explores the myriad cultural and musical influences that define a resilient city and its resilient populace. Excellent singing by Clinton Derrick-Carroll and Jannie Jones as the male and female leads pulls the listeners through music and lyrics as diverse as thumping party tunes like "Dew Drop Inn" and "Hey Pocky Way," past voodoo-tinged romps like "Gris Gris Gumbo Ya Ya" and heart-rending ballads such as "Ruler of My Heart" and "Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans," to stirring traditional gospel numbers.

Jones has a lush mezzo-soprano voice with fine range and an ability to make shouts, growls and sultry whispers perfectly appropriate. Derrick-Carroll is a consummate song-and-dance man with boundless enthusiasm and a gift for seamless transitions between divergent musical styles. Both have the acting craft to make the additional roles of policewoman and water pump operator poignant when they slip into their Katrina horror stories. A tight trio of Chip Porter on guitar, Jeremy Cohen on piano and Michael De Castro on drums provides plenty of musical power and both Porter (as Dr. Johnay) and Cohen (as Professor Short Hair) add some fine solo vocals. Cohen is an accomplished actor as well.

Ramsey, who wrote and directed the production, added a pair of young tap dancer-singers to the original cast for the Wilmington version. Local actors Paul Pinkett and Tatiana Lofton make solid contributions. The final scenes of the play bring a rather too simplistic conclusion, but the musical energy sustains the action. The production values supplied by the Delaware Theatre Company really enhance this show. Eric Schaeffer's subdued but very effective set gave the performers plenty of space for singing, dancing and playing instruments, and Joshua Schulman created lighting effects that heightened the dramatic action. A show about "the Big Easy" needs flamboyant costumes and Holly Payne certainly provided them.

"Fire on the Bayou" is filled with thrilling music and powerful images, and the performances of Jones and Derrick-Carroll are well worth seeing.

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STAGES

WEB EXCLUSIVE! *FIRE ON THE BAYOU* “*COMPELLING AND VISUALLY STUNNING*”

By Michael Evans

This great music, superbly performed as it is, would by itself make a thoroughly engaging evening, but this well-crafted theater piece also yields deeper, more substantial pleasures. It tells a visually compelling and moving story that is much more than the sum of its parts.

A five member band of street musicians, bedecked in their finest attire, “descend on Mardi Gras dawn,” and occupy a corner in the French Quarters to weave an underlying narrative that thread songs and tales into a cohesive and moving story. The vivid first-person accounts of rescue personnel living through Katrina contain perhaps the most eloquent language of the show, and give the music a deeper, more poignant resonance.

The structure of the play follows a well-crafted rhythm of shifting moods and textures. There are a great many occasions of laughter. It is sheer, exuberant poetry. The superb performances, and dazzling visual elements delighted the senses, while the deeper meaning seeped into my consciousness without ever being preachy or didactic. The total effect was very moving. Literally, during the iconic tune “Hey Pocky Way,” the entire audience rose and danced while waving their napkins as instructed.

With regard to the catastrophe of Katrina, I found the show to be cathartic--in the classical dramatic sense. Like the beautifully staged jazz funeral in the second act, it elicits feelings of grief and awe, which then find palpable release.

“Fire On The Bayou” is a musical celebration of New Orleans and the people who inhabit this beautiful city--the mostly unknown, often poor and struggling, working class people who have always been the wellspring of its unique culture and art. It is also a kind of gathering in of the spirits, a calling home of those who were scattered in the post-Katrina Diaspora. Underlying the music of this show is a theme of hope--an affirmation of a people, who will survive, prevails. They “will not be moved” or will not lose their indomitable spirit. “Fire On The Bayou” is a memorable theatrical experience for years to come.

FIRE ON THE BAYOU

2009 East Coast Premiere at the Delaware Theatre Company

By JOHN CHAMBLESS, Staff Writer

WILMINGTON, Del. -- As a city known for its blowout parties and its massive human tragedy, New Orleans is fertile ground for exploration. "Fire on the Bayou," which is getting its East Coast premiere at the Delaware Theatre Company, does a good job of untangling the roots of the place. Kevin Ramsey wrote the show as a tribute to his birthplace. The evening unfolds like a concert with some spoken asides, sliding gracefully from iconic tunes such as "Iko Iko" and "Proud Mary" to original songs Ramsey created to filter the city's good times through the words of people caught up in Hurricane Katrina. The show takes place on a downtown street corner. A band -- guitarist Chip Porter, keyboardist Jeremy Cohen and drummer Michael De Castro -- are the accompaniment as two main players sing the songs and give voice to the fictionalized reminiscences of Katrina's victims.

Striding onto the stage in full Mardi Gras regalia, the colorfully named Spyboy Jambalaya (played by Clinton Derrick-Carroll) is a tireless centerpiece of the evening. He's matched by dynamic vocalist Jannie Jones, as Queen Marie. Together, they create a musical tapestry that's both bouncy and somber. Providing a counterpoint is tapdancer Paul Pinkett, a seventh-grader from Delaware who has some show-stopping dance routines. He has the poise and grace of a professional dancer. Playing his sister, Lil' Marie, is Tatiana Lofton. They play children who have been apparently orphaned by Katrina and who now work the streets for tips. In the course of the show, they come to understand more about their city.

Both young performers contribute to many of the songs, and Lofton has a spotlight song, "When the Levee Broke," that should bring the audience to its feet every night. Frequently stepping out from behind the keyboards, Cohen plays several characters during the show, performing with boundless enthusiasm whether he's just playing, or leading the company in a New Orleans strut. The musical selections are played as snippets -- just enough to make their points, and then moving on. They're all impeccably performed, but standouts include "Dew Drop Inn," a blues shuffle that salutes the city's legendary nightlife and throws in a guide to N'awlins language quirks. The city's roots in voodoo are highlighted in "Gris-Gris Gumbo Ya-Ya," which Jones delivers with the proper spooky spirit. Slipped into the middle of the song is a spoken recollection of a man working the city's pumps on the eve of Katrina. Other text passages address the squalor of the Superdome, and the frustration of a young doctor facing a crowd of sick people with no supplies. Randy Newman's "Louisiana 1927" is the frame for the recollections of a homeowner who flees the rising waters but loses his family. "Fire on the Bayou" is quick to celebrate the fun of New Orleans as well, and the cast makes the most of a hand-clapping "Down By the Riverside," a get-on-your-feet sing-along to "Hey Pocky Way," and a rousing "When the Saints Go Marching In."

There are moments of brilliance in the staging, particularly a mournful "St. James Infirmary," as a rectangle of light on the stage suggests the outline of a coffin while the cast segues into "Just A Closer Walk With Thee." The show doesn't get bogged down in blaming anyone, and it comes off as a celebration, not a wake. It does lay out the numbers of lost lives and destroyed homes, but buoys the spirit on a bedrock of death-defying music. The roots of New Orleans run deep, and "Fire on the Bayou" makes sure you come away with a new appreciation of them.



- Please feel free to contact UMT if you would like more information. Our contact information is listed below.

Urban Musical Tours, LLC
Kevin Ramsey, Author/Director
T: 818-469-5863
E: umtlive@gmail.com