

Bullish on Parade

By Byron Woods

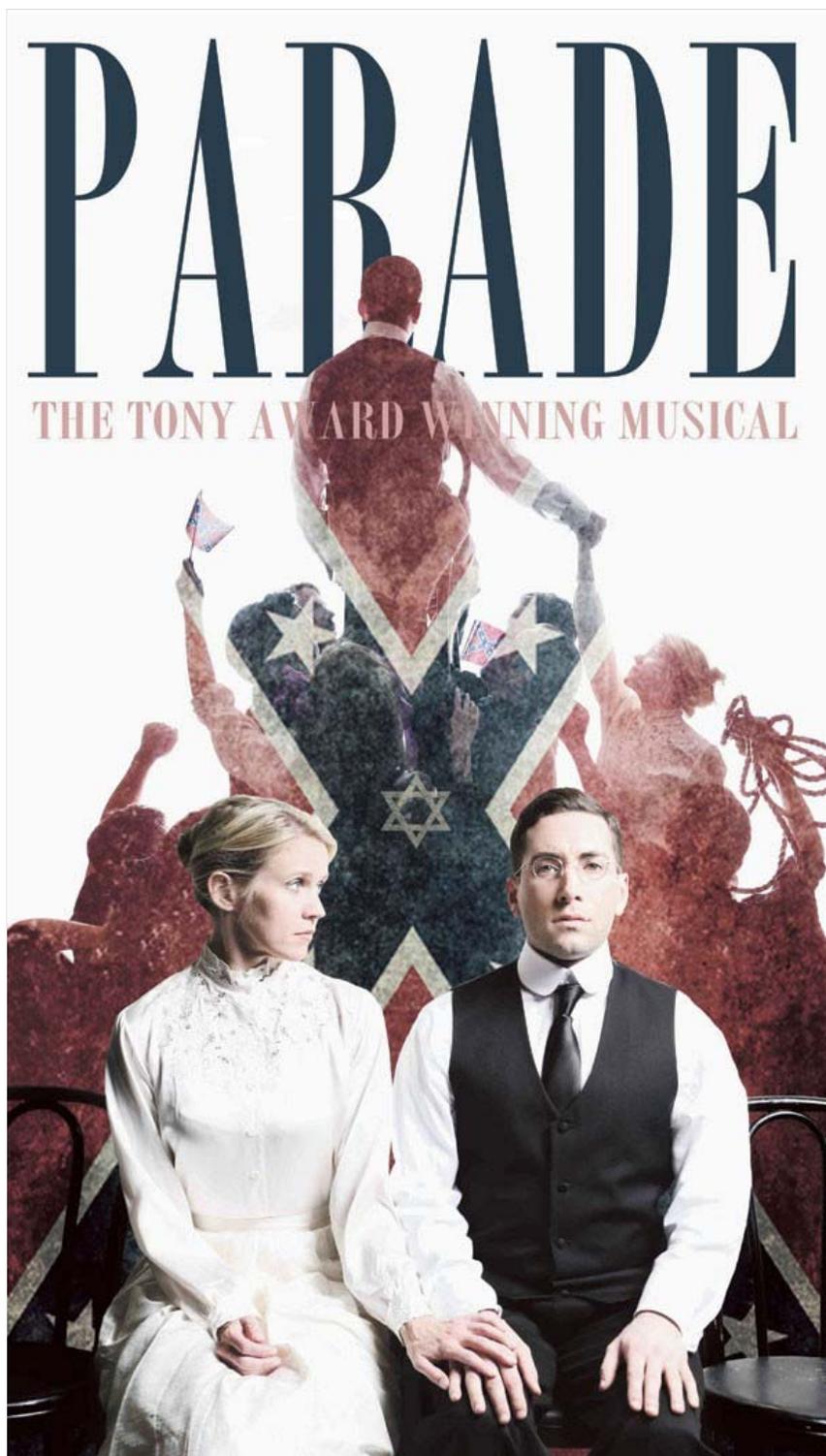


Photo by Curtis Brown

A historic miscarriage of justice in Parade

When two regional companies stage the same play in the same season, theatergoers get an illuminating chance to witness what disparate directors and design teams see in the same script, comparing differences in emphasis, interpretation and abilities.

Three months after a hybrid student/faculty production at Duke overreached in a checkered regional premiere of *PARADE* (see our review at [http://www.indyweek.com/indyweek/bullish-on-parade/Content?oid=42...](#)),

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Three months after a hybrid student/faculty production at Duke overreached in a checkered regional premiere of *PARADE* (see our review at [indyweek.com](http://www.indyweek.com)), Theatre Raleigh shows us how it's done in its current production. This imaginative but surefooted take on the award-winning 1999 musical, based on the murder trial of Leo Frank in Atlanta in 1915, burnishes the company's reputation for professional-grade work.

Set designer Chris Bernier and director Eric Woodall's nimble production concept lends an added measure of intimacy to Kennedy Theater by moving the performance area closer to the front rows and placing audience banks along the left and right sides of the stage. The latter stratagem makes the audience look like jury members during climactic courtroom scenes.

A brisker pace and a more nuanced view of the subject, particularly in a dissonant final scene, set this production apart. Of course, the talent doesn't hurt, either.

Zachary Prince ably probes the certitudes and doubts of Leo, a Brooklynite fish-out-of-water in the deep South. Lauren Kennedy was devastating as his wife, Lucille, in songs such as "You Don't Know This Man." In a strong supporting cast, Maurice Johnson's rich voice thrilled us in multiple roles during "Interrogation" and "A Rumblin' and A Rollin'," even if the staging in another solo, "Feel the Rain Fall," felt over the top.

Sherry Lee Allen's choreography enlivened the governor's dance against Julie Bradley's precise seven-piece orchestra. Though this version answered lingering questions about Alfred Uhry's book, Jason Robert Brown's occasionally boilerplate lyrics still vended familiar big-stage emotions in "This Is Not Over Yet" and "That's What He Said."

Shocking—but effective—photographic evidence confronts us in a moving production that will not let us forget a historic miscarriage of justice.

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