

# Metropolis' 'Beehive' takes patrons back to the '60s in a showcase of local young talent

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By Erin Fleming

Metropolis Performing Arts Center closes out its 2017-2018 season with the musical revue *Beehive: The 60's Musical*—a solid production that showcases many promising young local talents tackling an impressive lineup of beloved mid-century pop tunes.

Conceived in the '80s by the legendary agent/producer **Larry Gallagher**, *Beehive* takes audiences on a journey through the tumultuous '60s, told from the perspective of six women who came of age in the decade of lost innocence and civil unrest.

The women channel the styles of female icons of rock, soul and folk to show how changing attitudes towards women, civil rights, war and the American Dream were reflected in the music of the time. Starting with early girl group classics like **The Chiffons'** "Sweet Talking Guy," **The Supremes'** "You Can't Hurry Love" and **The Angels'** "My Boyfriend's Back," the show progresses chronologically, finally reaching the more subversive or daring diva turns like **Dusty's** "Son of a Preacher Man," **Aretha's** "Never Loved A Man," and **Janis'** "Cry Baby."

It's quite a challenging array of styles for one cast to take on, and some of the production suffers from a little too much retro saccarchine and not enough grit, perhaps due to the choices made by Director/Choreographer **Dina DiCostanzo** and Musical Director **Kenneth McMullen** about which characters sing which songs. The same voices which serve lyrical ballads like "Where the Boys Are," and torch songs like "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" well enough are often missing the underlying, defiant soul that one expects to anchor renditions of teen rebel laments by **The Shirelles** or rock anthems by **Grace Slick**.



DiCostanzo and McMullen seem to have approached each of the 40 numbers individually, deciding that some would be treated as general homages to their respective genres, while others are more of a modern reimagining of the original hit recording, perhaps with a different tempo or a more musical-theater-friendly interpretation. There are also a few straight-up, dead-on impersonations, such as **Caitlin Dobbins'** remarkable transformation into **Tina Turner** on "Proud Mary." It makes for a bit of a muddle in terms of tone, although unquestionably still an entertaining one.

DiCostanzo's charming choreography helps keep the pace quick and makes great use of what is otherwise an unimpressive set. Costume Designer **Rachel S. Parent** and Wig Designer **Dianne Sizemore** clearly had a lot of fun depicting the period's ever-changing hemlines and hair-do's. When **Christie Burgess'** confidently struts out in her final costume, a Woodstock-inspired long fringed vest and hip huggers, exposing her clearly pregnant belly while belting out the hippie anthem "Make Your Own Kind Of Music," well, it's arguably the most female-empowering moment of the show.

The friendly interplay between the performers and the audience during "The Name Game" sets an intimate, lighthearted tone which is expertly maintained throughout by vocal powerhouse **Jayla Williams-Craig**. Smartly cast in the role (originally named Wanda) which carries the bulk of the narration—almost as an emcee, **Williams-Craig** is an unabashed star in any decade, and, along with fellow ensemble members **Bre Jacobs** and **Dobbins**, is one of the most consistent matches of the period's many looks, feels and sounds.



As is evident by the unrelenting popularity on both stage and screen of jukebox musicals (*Mamma Mia!*, *Movin' Out*), bio-musicals (*Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, *Buddy: the Buddy Holly Story*) and genre-focused revues (*Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*), there is a definitive subset of the average musical theater lover whose members enjoy live, dramatic renditions of pop music.

Many of these theatergoers are diehard groupies of specific kinds of music or artists, and often much more forgiving toward things like contrived plot lines or underdeveloped characters. For this kind of fan, it's his or her personal connection to the music which is most important. *Beehive* will definitely delight this kind of audience, as well as anyone who grew up loving the girl groups and divas of the sixties.

*Metropolis Performing Arts Center presents "Beehive: The 60's Musical" through August 25 at The Metropolis, 111 Campbell Street, Arlington Heights. More information and tickets are available [here](#).*

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