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BWW Reviews: CATS at the Panasonic Theatre is a Magical Night Out!

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by Alan Aronshtam

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[4.5 Out of 5 Stars](#)



Tonight the new Canadian production of *Cats* opened to thunderous applause and a standing ovation from patrons at the Panasonic Theatre. As soon as I entered the venue, I knew I was in for a treat. *Cats*, which usually plays much larger theatres, felt very at home in this intimate space. One patron near me even commented that sitting up close one would be "in the splash zone," however this proved to not be an issue in my second row seat.

Gino Berti's news choreography is incredible when viewed from up close, as small nuances which would otherwise be missed by the audience can now be fully appreciated. The large company filled the stage well, although at times I felt a little worried that they might bump into each other due to how close they were, but that too was not an issue.

This new production, directed by Dave Campbell is a masterpiece. Campbell clearly has a touch as magical as "Mister Mistofollees," and he perfectly shapes the production in a new way. One thing that really stood out was that while the actors in this production still moved and danced like cats, they do so in a more human way than in previous incarnations of the show, making it more relatable from an audience perspective.

Special mention must be made to [Martin Samuel](#) as "Rum Tum Tugger," who stole the show and literally left the audience screaming for more. Other outstanding performances include that of [Michel LaFleche](#) as the narrating cat "Munkustrap," [Susan Cuthbert](#) as "Jennyanydots," and Cory O'Brien as "Gus."

[Ma-Anne Dionisio](#) as "Grizabella" is perfection, and I cannot possibly see how her performance could be improved. Her youthful voice adds a new layer to the character who is old and withered by age, and her performance of "Memory" brought me to tears.

The new scenic design and lighting design work well in this new production, and while on a smaller scale than the original designs, it really fits the intimate space that is the Panasonic theatre. However, the projections added to this production do not really fit the show at all. From my position in the theatre I could see the projection screen and the reflective hologram material, and the image itself was skewed and blurred, giving the entire moment a cheap feel. In my experiences seeing different productions, the material stands on its own, and does not need flashy production values such as this to be successful.

The only other small issue I had with this production was the sound of the orchestra. Sadly, this production of *Cats* uses three keyboards in place of many of the instruments found in the original orchestration which gives the orchestra somewhat of a flat sound at times. This is especially noticeable whenever a solo string or horn plays, as none of these physical instruments are in the orchestra, and these sounds are produced by synthesizers. This effect is diminished in sections with a larger instrument set playing. This however, is a very common practice in all musical theatre orchestras around the country, from *Mamma Mia* to *The Book of Mormon*, and is unavoidable when the costs of production these shows keeps rising - and it won't really hinder your enjoyment of the production.

Overall, this production is a wonderful presentation of this classic show, and is a chance to introduce it to those who have never seen it before, or re-live the magic if you're a returning viewer. This production makes a great night out for those young and old - a wonderful evening for the entire family.



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Alan is a second year undergraduate Marketing Student at York University in Toronto, Ontario. He has always had a passion for theater and has performed in various community theater productions and continues to work on his triple threat skills.

Alan also has 11 years of intensive dance training under his belt, and was the recipient of a Canadian national title in 2006. Alan first achieved success with Theatre online with his blog Broadway Toronto, and was later the founder and Editor in Chief of the popular lifestyle blog Life in Toronto. Besides his passion of going to the theater, Alan also loves sharing his love of theater with others, and is thrilled to be writing for the team at BroadwayWorld!

Alan loves hearing your opinions in the comments of his articles, and through email.

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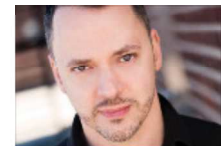
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





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