

Portola's Honk! is Tons of Feather-Fluffing Fun! 2/11/2022

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Portola's production of Honk! delights audiences with a classic, heartwarming tale of self-acceptance and love for one's true nature.

Ugly, a rather unusual duckling, doesn't quite fit in with his quackier brethren. After losing his way, Ugly embarks on a wild journey back home to his loving mother Ida and attempts to evade the scheming Cat with a mighty appetite. Ultimately, Ugly learns to appreciate himself as he is, honk and all.

The true strength of this production lies in its ensemble, whose strong, subtle relationships and consistent interactions with one another work well to liven the atmosphere of each scene. Their collective vocal strength is especially apparent in the closing number "Warts And All," each member's voice melding together to create impeccable harmonies.

With the characteristic cunning of a feline, Cat (Jamaal Walker) slinks nimbly across the stage in search of his next meal. His low chuckles and deceptively charming vocal inflections paint him as refined and suave, but also subtly communicate his devious true intentions.

Bullfrog (Nicholas Nieto) employs excellent comedic timing whilst delivering one froggy pun after the next. His eccentricity is expressed through wacky, energetic physicality that draws a strong contrast to Ugly's (Liam Fricker) clumsy, unsure stumbling.

Stage management (Aiza Khalil and Natalie Hart) calls cues effectively with excellent timing, never once missing a beat and bringing a smoothness to every scene and transition alike. This fluidity is furthered by Carpentry crew's (Marco Machado) functional and creative set that lends itself well to seamless scene changes. A rustic life-size chicken coop is easily wheeled on and off and acts as a crucial central fixture to the farm. Additionally, the levels provided by set pieces like the large couch and armchair allow actors to create interesting stage pictures and variability in movement.

Costumes crew (Kori Martinez, Seogyung Han, Hannan Al-N-Dee Al Apache) clearly designates character traits through costumes that vary in style but still match aesthetically. For example, Ida's (Rory Miller) motherly, protective nature is represented by a long, quilted patchwork dress. Hair and Makeup crew (Shreya Thimmareddy, Giselle Stivi) further this thoughtful effort with colorful, detailed accents, one instance being the use of ornate white masquerade masks that communicate the elegance and nobility of the swans.

Portola amuses audiences with a healthy dose of poultry playfulness!

