

June 4, 2009 - LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

By Steve Allen- KFUE-FM

STAGES is back and they open the summer season with a laugh-filled production of Little Shop of Horrors. This crazy little musical with book and lyrics by Howard Ashman and music by Alan Menken is fast and furious and the STAGES cast is, as usual, beyond belief. Director Michael Hamilton and choreographer Stephen Bourneuf add their excellent touches to make it another hallmark of polished professionalism.

Let's face it; Ben Nordstrom can do just about anything. He's been all over St. Louis area stages and never disappoints. With the nerdy Seymour, he adds another singing, acting, dancing feather to his cap. His co-star, a ditzzy but beautiful Audrey as played to the hilt by Maria Couch, is a perfect match.

The supporting cast is the usual top-notch featuring Darin DePaul as the florist Mushnik and Todd Dubail as the creepy dentist. Todd also doubles, triples and on and on playing a series of characters that makes for a hilarious and quite remarkable moment in the second act with non-stop costume (and even gender) changes.

The delightful trio that acts as a Greek Chorus throughout is also stupendous. It features Valisia Lekae, Rashidra Scott and Lisa M. Ramey as they dance, sing and just slip in and out of the action keeping us up on the Skid Row goings on. The powerful voice of Geno Segers booms out of the man-eating plant that is the focal point of the show while Marc A. Petrosino provides the movement for the awesome Audrey II. Also of note are Monte J. Howell and Shaun Sheley as the other puppeteers.

We've come to expect miracles on the small Kirkwood Theatre stage and this production of Little Shop of Horrors does not let us down. With the usual flawless cast and production values, it's another "monster" hit for Stages.

Check out Little Shop of Horrors at Stages playing through June 28th. This is Steve Allen with theatre news all around St. Louis for Classic 99.