

Live review: *The Color Purple*

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The Color Purple

Belk Theater

May 19, 2009

The Deal: Presented by Oprah Winfrey, *The Color Purple* - a Broadway musical based on the classic novel by Alice Walker – hits the stage of Belk Theater.

The Good: *The Color Purple* begins with an introduction to Celie (played by Kenita R. Miller), the story's main character, who is 14 years old at the time. During a church service (and after all the gossip), she must leave with her father and sister, to give birth to her second child – a child, whose father is that of her own (though we find out later, this was her stepfather) and which she will be forced to give up. Celie and her sister, Nettie's love for one another is clear and shown in the beginning through "Huckleberry Pie," "Somebody Gonna Love You," and "Our Prayer." The real treat came when Sofia (played by Felicia P. Fields) made her way onto the stage. It could be because she's such an independent character and the one who teaches Celie more than she even realizes. "Hell No!" sung by the character of Sofia was humorous. Shortly after that the town is in a scurry during "Shug Avery Comin' to Town."

A highlight and very different scene occurred during the second part of the show. "African Homeland," takes place as Celie is reading the letters her sister has sent her from Africa. Members of the cast showed off dance moves and a number of jumps and flips, in tribal costume. In addition, the show ended with a crowd pleaser via "The Color Purple." Throughout the musicals entirety singing was on key and parts were played well. It's easy to feel sorry for Celie and her many trials, but it's even easier to see her as a dynamic character that changes for all the better in the end. As Celie becomes more familiar with herself, she becomes stronger and more independent. In the musical, this is made clear, which makes for a truly touching and uplifting performance.

The Bad: Everything moved fast, though it was a lot to pack in from the start. The time spent between Celie and Shug Avery (played by Angela Robinson) seems brief and a little too quick for them to be so close. Celie and Shug kiss a few times during the duet "What About Love?", but it is quick and seems less like a lesbian romance, which is more explicit in Walker's novel.

The Verdict: A must-see, but it's better if you are a bit familiar with the book or movie prior to seeing it, since it moves so fast. Songs will catch you and characters will pull you in deep for a stir of emotions.