

Katie Doi

Mr. Bengford

Technical Theatre I 4

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Beauty and the Beast

I watched Disney's Beauty and the Beast on at the San Jose Center for the Performing Arts. It was directed by Glenn Casale. I attended one of the performances on May 23rd 2008. It is a musical about an inventor's daughter named Belle. She is the most beautiful girl in the village, but she considered a bit odd. A hotshot hunter, Gaston, wants to marry her but she refuses him. One day on his way to a convention, Belle's father gets lost in a forest and stumbles upon the castle of a terrible beast. The beast locks him in the dungeon and Belle comes and reasons with him in order to free her father. She is treated well by all the servants of the mansion because they think she is going to be the one to break the spell on them. All of these servants were turned into pieces of furniture and the prince into a beast once he was shallow toward an enchantress. Eventually the beast falls in love with Belle. Belle becomes homesick and returns home to find her father being tormented by Gaston and his men. When he finds she was with the beast he sets out to kill him. The beast kills Gaston and is injured in the process. Belle falls in love with the beast and breaks the spell.

The set was amazing. It was designed by J. Branson. The drops were very detailed and gave that Disney cartoon effect. The town seemed like a cozy village with the cobble stoned floors, and the stores and houses that actors could peek out of. The west wing unit was really great. It was detailed all the way around; there were the hidden twinkling

lights and foggers, and it made the transition from the battle scene and the scene inside the west wing very smooth. The set pieces for “Be Our Guest” were my favorites. It had everything; there were oversized champagne bottles that spewed sparks, chase lights, and anything else needed for a big showstopper like “Be Our Guest”. I was a little disappointed when I first saw what was there but then that whole drop for that introduction turned out to be a scrim. When I saw that my jaw dropped. It had a huge wow factor. I really like how they gave the illusion of the castle. There were just these huge pink columns on the dimly lit stage that would shift showing the actors were moving to a new room. It showed how huge and uniform this castle was. Overall I think the set established the correct mood and background for this musical.

Since this was a musical sound was very important. After learning so much about sound this year I’ve come to really appreciate all of those visual cues. Every time that dungeon door slammed or Lefou punched I cringed. These door slams were loud and sounded very severe which gave the audience a sense of the rage and strength of the beast. All of these punches sounded very cartoony and added to the comic effect of Lefou and Gaston’s relationship and they lightened the mood. It seems people enjoy seeing a dorky guy getting unintentionally beat up. The orchestra provided all of the songs and underscoring for the musical. These underscores really intensified the mood of what was going on in a scene. The music and sound effects were great and heightened the mood and really added to the play.

I really enjoyed the musical. I am a big fan of Disney and it seems like they never disappoint. The sets, lighting, costumes, and songs were great. I was actually a little disappointed in Belle. I don’t know a lot about the musical theatre aspect; but to me, her

voice didn't seem to fit some of the songs very well. However the guys were great, and that dance in "Gaston" was awesome. Overall I really liked this production of Disney's Beauty and the Beast.