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## **Thoroughly Modern Millie: “Chic, unique and quite adorable”**

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Ram’s Head’s stage adaptation of the 1967 film-musical “Thoroughly Modern Millie” is bursting with talent and energy, bringing the old classic to life for modern viewers. With its brilliant score written by Jeanine Tesori and clever, original lyrics written by Dick Scanlan, the musical is already worth seeing. But Ram’s Head’s production is especially worth seeing. Michael Rhaney, the producer, and Allison Portnoy, the director, do brilliant jobs of putting together a spectacle no one will want to miss.

Millie Dillmount, played by Taylor Thibodeaux, is a young girl from Kansas who moves to New York during the Roaring Twenties to leave her small-town ways behind and embrace the life of a modern New York girl. She mistakenly thinks that a modern girl must forsake love, and she plans to marry rich, fearing that she will be forced to live the life of her unhappy mother and grandmother.

Although Thibodeaux often comes off as timid in songs, her voice is beautiful and fits the role. The shyness and hesitance in her musical performances is sharply contrasted by confidence in her dancing, stage movement and dialogue. The duality actually adds an extra layer to Millie, who pretends to have it all figured out but who is still trying to find her place in New York.

Thibodeaux is not the only talent to keep one’s eyes and ears on. She is accompanied by a wonderful cast of fun, charming actors with powerful voices. Miss Dorothy, the sweet, naïve girl who quickly becomes Millie’s best friend, is perfectly portrayed by Laura Stampler, whose clear, operatic voice brings the character alive. Stampler’s timing is especially on point, leading to a number of the musical’s many comedic moments.

The show’s male leads are charmingly acted by Benno Rosenwald as Mr. Trevor Graydon and Brett Hammon as Jimmy, Millie’s love interest. Hammon makes a fun Jimmy who is charismatic and a pleasure to watch. Rosenwald’s powerful singing voice, skillful dancing and comedic timing are especially captivating. The character of Trevor Graydon becomes as funny and real as that stern, male figure everyone seems to meet at least once in their lives.

“Modern Millie”’s chief villain — and chief humorist — Mrs. Meers, is played by a confident and comical Olivia Haas. She adds much sexiness to the role, making the already fun character even more fun to watch. Although the role is acted brilliantly, some of the funniness gets lost in Haas’ quiet speaking voice and subtle movements. She is truly a spectacle, though, during her song performances. Her voice is strong, and her dancing is full of talent and sex appeal. Her portrayal of the mean Mrs. Meers is perfect and one of the highlights of the Ram’s Head production.

A talented cast is only one of the many things that pulled “Thoroughly Modern Millie” together. Amy Jacobson’s choreography was playful and energetic, adding to the mood of the play. The dancing really

brought the audience to the excitement, fun and sometimes silliness of the 1920s. The dances were well executed by the cast and ensemble members, creating many moments when the audience couldn't resist the urge to tap their feet.

What really brought the musical to a superior level, though, was the orchestra. The music helped to carry along the story and set the tone for every moment and scene. The song execution was tight, precise and professional. The orchestra could have stood alone, and the show would still be worth seeing. That's how crucial the pit was to the success of the play.

Millie Dillmount has a lot to learn when she arrives in New York. She finds that even a modern girl can't say no to love. Her journey is sweet, comical and one truly worth seeing.



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