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Review: Singin' In The Rain at the Civic

By [Paul Simei-Barton](#)

Grant Almirall in the Gene Kelly role of Don Lockwood in Singin' In The Rain (Hagen Hopkins).

With so many delightful moments leading up to the show's iconic tune there is never any doubt that it's going to be carried off in style - but Gene Kelly's song and dance routine from the 1952 film has such legendary status that reproducing it on stage is not without risk.

Singin' in the Rain floats on an intoxicating feeling of romantic euphoria that seems entirely spontaneous but making it work on stage means getting whole of host of things just right and this production has all its ducks perfectly aligned:

First there is the meteorological factor that requires state-of-the-art aquatic engineering to create a deluge of biblical proportions.

There is the unforgettable melody that is given a wonderfully bouncy arrangement by a very tight live band.

For the dancing, Andrew Wright's award winning choreography avoids slavish imitation while respectfully honoring the original and Grant Almirall's performance somehow manages to combine balletic elegance with the gleeful exuberance of a child splashing about in puddles.

But this is not a one-hit show.

As the comedic sidekick Steven van Wyk injects an infectious sense of fun into the whole enterprise with a series of Chaplinesque sight gags in *Make 'Em Laugh* and an endearingly silly spirit of mischief in *Moses Sipposes*.

The villain of the piece is an air-headed schemer who is unable to make the transition into talkies due to her excruciatingly screechy voice.

Taryn-Lee Hudson's hilarious performance is tinged with poignancy that comes from a complete lack of self-awareness coupled with narcissistic self-obsession.

The old-fashioned romance at the heart of the show crackles with the kind of yearning that keeps you up all night and the electricity between the two leads surges through their dance numbers.

Bethany Dickson playing a chorus girl who dares to dream establishes a feisty presence that is matched by Grant Almirall's sweet tenor carrying the delicate emotions of *You Were Meant for Me*.

But perhaps the biggest surprise come with the complex treatment of the Hollywood dream factory that presents a very contemporary mediation on the elusive borderline between what is real and what is make-believe.

Rather than making the studios look like manipulative villains the show suggests audiences are knowing participants in the process and affirms that mediated reality is not always lacking in authenticity.

The phenomenal popularity of *Singin' in the Rain* seems to connect with all age groups suggesting there is something more than

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nostalgia involved. It feels like a realignment - a realization that the cheesy, conventional world of the 1950's has something to offer in our jaded times.



Grant Almirall as Don Lockwood (centre) in Singin' In The Rain (Hagen Hopkins).

- NZ Herald

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