

Learning in a Digital Era

ADPA4001

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COMPONENT 2

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TASK 1: Theatre Review Essay

Word Count: 1,098

Title: Ghost The Musical Review Essay

On Saturday 8th March I attended a performance of Ghost the Musical at the Wales Millennium Centre. As I went in with no prior knowledge of the show, I was pleasantly surprised by the emotional depth and captivating storyline. The cast did an excellent job of conveying depth of the characters' emotions, which added a significant layer to the overall performance. However, few minor adjustments to the performance could enhance it further.

Ghost the musical is by Bill Kenwright LTD who are established commercial and entertainment producers who are renowned for having decades of experience. Bill Kenwright has been involved in plays and productions that centre supernatural themes, such as "The Women in Black" a ghost story that has been adapted to stage with similar themes to Ghost the musical of loss and grief. With this play being such a success, it sets ambitious standards due to this musical having similarities throughout. The director Bob Tomson has built a diverse career and has achieved recognition through nominations for prestigious awards such as a BAFTA, OLIVIER, and TONY, highlighting his talent and contribution to theatre and film. He is regarded as a "director with an international reputation garnered over a 40 year career of unprecedented success" (Performingartistes.co.uk, 2024) which sets a compelling standard for what I anticipated would be a successful performance.

One of the standout aspects of the production is the set design by Mark Bailey. It was simple yet effective; the use of the New York backdrop and office tables made scenes feel authentic to the setting. However, I did have one issue; during a scene designed to depict the outside of apartments, part of the apartment room was left visible on stage. Although, they used lighting to divert attention from it, the presence of that set piece was distracting. It may have been beneficial removing it from view altogether. On the positive, the transitions between the set for different scenes were executed seamlessly and enhanced the flow of the production. Props were also immaculate and enhanced each scene however, there was one issue during "Rain/Hold on" where one ensemble member struggled to open their umbrella, but they handled this admirably and did not let it impact their dancing. This is a screen to stage musical which presents challenges itself, as it's argued that "The use of digital technologies in screen-to-stage musicals often leads to productions that are more focused on the spectator's experience" rather than "the quality of the musical itself"

(Osantinki, 2017, p. 75) I deem this argument incorrect, as the use of digital technologies was impeccable and didn't obstruct the I'm performance itself as I believe they focused on it just as much the technological aspect.

The vocal performance in the show were impressive overall. Rebekah Lowings, who played Molly Jenson, particularly stood out with her remarkable vocal range and musicality. Lowing's ability to convey emotion was incredible, particularly during "With You" she effectively portrayed the themes of grief and love through her performance. Diction presented a challenge for me in several parts of the musical. There were moments where articulation could have been clearer, which occasionally made it challenging to understand lyrics. With more focus on clarity and pacing, the overall impact could have been stronger. Diction is crucial to musical theatre as the words being understood helps to "give the "tone" of the entire lyrical-dramatical action." (Fagarasan, 2023, p.49) which I completely agree with as without the clarity of lyrics the message of the song can be lost therefore losing the emotional expression with it. I found a lack of pronunciation of consonants with argumentative scenes where Carl Bruner played by James Mateo- Salt and Willie Lopez played by Jules Brown argued as they emphasised vowels where with the speed of the scene, I lost what was being said. However, in the scene they were still able to portray emotion as they conveyed the intensity of the anger very well, but I just think it could have been emphasised further with more clarity and understanding in what was being said by the two.

The acting in this show displayed a commendable level of skill. The chemistry between Molly and Sam was noteworthy adding meaningful depth to their interactions. The actors conveyed a strong emotional connection, enhancing the overall performance. One area for growth could be in the emotional conveyance of Sam Wheat, portrayed by Josh ST. Claire. For instance, there were certain scenes where a deeper emotional connection could enhance the characters impact. For example, the moment when Molly and Carl were about to kiss, he stood there with no reaction. I believe it would have portrayed a much more compelling performance if he displayed a sense of anger in that moment rather than waiting until his next line to react.

A crucial part is the ensemble, and, in this case, it shone. The choreography by Alistair David was impeccable it was simple yet polished and clean. It was evident that a significant amount of time had been dedicated to perfecting it, as I observed only a couple of minor inconsistencies, such as one performer not being in a bevelled foot like the others on stage. But these intricate details can easily be addressed in future performances. The ensemble demonstrated impressive harmonies, highlighting the dedication of musical director Jordan Alexander. The ensemble worked well

together, blending their voices cohesively. Additionally, their use of dynamics brought an exciting dimension to the performance. Overall, the ensemble delivered a truly engaging performance.

The songs have been criticised that they “aren’t particularly memorable:” (Masterson, 2025). I do partially agree as I believe this stems from some songs being weaker than others, resulting in fewer engaging tracks to listen to. However, the score blends elements of pop rock and musical theatre well, and the music complements the narrative effectively. “Unchained Melody” really stood out to me as it conveyed the emotion of love beautifully. Throughout, they used musical motifs associated with characters helping the audience connect with the story. For example, the motif used for Sam emphasised his struggles which I thought was thought out well.

In conclusion, the show was spectacular and highlights an immense level of preparation and skill. I genuinely enjoyed watching it, as it effectively conveyed a range of emotion, making it overall engaging. Comparing to other West end musicals of a similar calibre, it certainly holds its own. While it is simpler in style than other touring shows, it shines in its set design, musical depth, and the emotional authenticity. There are areas with potential for enhancement, but overall, it was an enjoyable show.

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Task 2: 3 Min Video

Video:

https://youtu.be/lpfBb7u7gh0?si=kN8lYK5rZYD9NMU_

Presentation:

https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/2405076_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/EZe2RUV-4X9Hr0EhxG4OSQIBXaG0B7o1jHXwDE1X1ltB0w?e=l8cpbN

Professional Development plan:

https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/2405076_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/EWdBG8qhMDxApYdxPr0JTeMBieqi74E6VFrp5YJ1KXEYZg?e=y4bdbR

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