

## 'The Addams Family – A New Musical Comedy' at McLean High School Theatre Company by Jason Landrone

Guest Author

Why not cap off Halloween with a late-night showing of *The Addams Family – A New Musical Comedy*? And so the cast, crew and creative team at the McLean High School Theatre Company (MTC) brought this newly available production to a nicely-filled Burks Auditorium well after both the evening's trick-or-treating and the witching hour itself was past. The much-costumed audience, including a weeping angel, chest-bursted victim of alien fame and a strangely humanoid giraffe-like horse, enjoyed the spectacle that the oddly familiar Addams Family transported from comic strip to stage. ★★★★☆



The cast of 'The Addams Family.' Photo by Isabel Zapata.

*The Addams Family* focuses on the classic family's antics. Wednesday Addams, the ultimate princess of darkness, has grown up and fallen in love with a sweet, smart young man from a respectable family – a man her parents have never met. As if that weren't upsetting enough, Wednesday confides in her father and begs him not to tell her mother. Now, Gomez Addams (Santiago Alfonzo-Mesa) must do something he's never done before – keep a secret from his beloved wife, Morticia (Helena Doms). Everything will change for the whole family on the fateful night they host a dinner for Wednesday's 'normal' boyfriend, Lucas, and his parents, Mal and Alice Beineke. With book by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice, music and lyrics by Andrew Lippa and based on characters created by Charles Addams, the Broadway production won the Broadway.com Audience Award for Favorite New Broadway Musical and featured Nathan Lane and Bebe Neuwirth as Gomez and Morticia Addams respectively.

As Director Amy Poe and Assistant Director Marielle Burt describe, "We love that this musical presents the off-kilter Addams characters as a special, crazy kind of cool. The eerie, entrancing mood of this bizarre night in the Addams's mansion is reflected in the production design, which was inspired by Van Gogh's painting "The Starry Night." The team hits a creative home run with this approach. The backdrop, in itself impressive, is nothing compared to the castle and moon that both dominate and fit the stage so perfectly. But the evening's declarative statement is the gargantuan picture frame that forms its own theater proscenium. Skewed and appropriately cracked, the massive

piece allows those who dare a glimpse into this crazy, cool world.

Production values continue to take center stage with superlative work from the costume and hair and make-up teams. Led by Miranda Creason, the costumes are spot on, whether conveying the wonderful quirkiness of the unpredictable Uncle Fester to the elegant, macabre Morticia. But it was with the massive troop of ancestors that both Creason and Hair and Makeup Head Syndey Studds truly shine. It is a colossal endeavor to bring the two dozen characters to life or, more appropriately, death but the respective teams succeed.

Making the trip to McLean is worth the time if, for no other reason, than to enjoy this kooky shows' production elements. Fortunately the cast brings the enthusiasm and effort one hopes for from a production of this kind.

With ten principles, several stand out. Helena Doms fills her Morticia with more emotional flare than is typically conveyed by this dead-pan role. Aided by natural charisma and character consistency, Doms nicely anchors scenes in which she appears. Filling what is clearly the evening's quirkiest role, Sam Brumbaugh jumps headfirst and succeeds in the wackiness that is Uncle Fester.

It is especially exciting to see young actors bring that something extra to roles, especially smaller ones, making them unusually memorable. Emma Gold, as the loveable, venerable Grandma Addams, is simply a joy to behold. Diane Suk, challenged with both a gender-jump and character-required masochistic tendencies, excels making her Pugsley both believable and oddly endearing. And Jeffrey Nolan (Lurch) brings the crowd to laughter on numerous occasions without uttering a word ... or perhaps with just the slightest of grave-like moans.

The principles cast, nicely rounded out by Santiago Alfonzo-Mesa, Lily Lord, Jack Posey, Matt Lucero, and Rachel Lawhead, each have moments of success. Lord, Posey and Lawhead provide impressive chops that help mostly overcome uneven vocals during evening.

While still a youngster on the local theater scene, Music Director Walter "Bobby" McCoy seems more a veteran given his numerous appearances throughout DC ably wielding the conductor baton. As usual, he guides his sizeable orchestra with confidence and energy. Choreographer Katie Perry's works is most evidenced in her large scene work with the Ancestors. An especially nice touch was her Ester Williams-inspired work in "The Moon and Me."

McLean High School Theatre Company's energetic team helps make an evening with *The Addams Family* more than worthwhile ... if not more than a little bit zany. And maybe that's exactly how it should be.

Running Time: Two hours and 30 minutes, including a 15-minute intermission.

[The Addams Family](#) plays through November 9, 2014 at McLean High School Theatre Company performing at the Burks Auditorium-1633 Davidson Road, in McLean, VA. For tickets, purchase them at the door, or [online](#).



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