

Review: 'Catch Me If You Can' at McLean High School

By **Annie Bradley Ermlick** - April 27, 2014



McLean High School's production of the Regional debut of *Catch Me If You Can*-a musical with a libretto by Terrence McNally and a score by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, of *Hairspray* fame, spins a wild tale of an FBI agent in pursuit of a clever criminal. It's based on the autobiographical **2002 film** (starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hanks) about Frank Abagnale, a con-artist takes on the identity of many professions and swindles people out of millions of dollars with forged checks.



Frank Abagnale Jr. and the Jet Set (Alex Stone and friends). Photo by Karen Perry.

From the first musical number, "Live and In Living Color," with glitzy, sequined costumes, I was blown away by MTC's production of *Catch Me If You Can*. Director Amy Poe and her team deliver a smash hit, all the more amazing since the rights to this show only recently became available. The show started off with a bang and ended in the clouds.

The stunning two-level set designed by Marielle Burt, made of psychedelic colors and geometric patterns, transported us back into the 1960s. The creative choreography also by Marielle Burt was enhanced by the trick of dancers appearing from special hidden entrances using the set beautifully. Each part of the set was not only visually interesting but extremely functional and versatile. The black and white sofa, sliding doors, colorful luggage, swanky studded white bar, and especially the circular draped part of the set that allowed for projections-all created visual variety and staging for the numbers. The transitions in this show were cleverly thought out and beautifully executed with scenes (

quickly, seamlessly, and with continuing action.

Although there were minor issues with the microphones, kudos go out to a member of the running crew who crawled onto the balcony to body microphone of Carl Hanratty (Jack Posey) during the musical number “Little Boy Be a Man” when Hanratty’s mic failed. Posey gave credit for not moving an inch, dropping character, or skipping a beat. When the mic failed to work, suddenly a handheld mic appeared in Ager’s hand, and the number seamlessly commenced. Kudos to the tech running crew for this flawless fix.

The swinging 60’s score is extremely interesting, with so much variety that it keeps you guessing. There are many different musical styles shown – like Jazz (“Don’t Break the Rules”), Big Band (“Strange But True”), Blues and Dixieland (“Family Tree”) and one song with a Gypsy feel (“Fly, Fly Away”). The thirteen musicians performing in the band, led by Musical Director Walter “Bobby” McCoy, did a phenomenal job of changing from one musical style to another effortlessly and kept the tempos perfectly in synch for the singers and dancers. The choreography echoed the music and matched the mood perfectly.

The role of con-man Frank Abagnale, Jr. was played by 16 year-old Alex Stone with confidence, charisma, and charm. Stone was a character actor that shifted through his many personas with ease. Frank, Jr. starts as a loveable and charismatic naïve school boy, and transforms into a proficient con artist that masquerades as a substitute French teacher, a Pan Am co-pilot, a doctor, and a lawyer. His pure tenor voice and dancing conjured images of Elvis Presley. His power ballad “Good Bye” was truly riveting and emotional, and showed his exceptional vocal chops. I could not have imagined it being performed any better.

Another phenomenal voice in the production was Jack Posey, playing FBI agent Carl Hanratty. At times, Posey’s singing reminded me of Connick, Jr. Posey portrayed the loneliness of Hanratty extremely well, and was the polar opposite of Stone’s Abagnale. Their chemistry was strong, and the bonding they displayed in the closing song “Strange But True” was genuine.

The love interest for Frank Jr. was prominent in the second act and boy was she worth the wait! Adorable and endearing soon-to-be fiancée Brenda, played by Lily Lord, won our hearts with the eleven o’clock show stopping number “Fly Fly Away.” It was staged to perfection and embellished by technical choices that framed and enabled Lord’s dynamic, crystal clear warm resonant vocals to soar.

Hanratty’s sidekicks, FBI Agents Branton (Thomas Kelty), Cod (Marshall Downing) and Dollar (Christophe Jelinski) were highly comic and distinct characters that together formed a tight Marx Brothers-like trio. Strong performances also came from Matt Lucero and Nicole Sullivan as Frank’s parents, and Will Stockton as Brenda’s father. Nancy Pruettt was a “firecracker” as Brenda’s mother Carol Strong. Anchoring the production, the ensemble dancers were in perfect synch while performing challenging combinations. A particular favorite was the rapid moving and syncopated musical number “Don’t Break the Rules.”

If you didn't catch this performance, you missed out. This is was a 'professional' looking and directed and performed production. With strong performances from non-seniors, the future is bright at McLean High School Theater Company.

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

***Catch Me If You Can* opens tonight and plays through this Sunday, April 27, 2013 at McLean High School -1633 Da
Road, in McLean, VA.**

For tickets, purchase them [online](#), or at the door.

INTERVIEWS

Catch This! McLean High School's 'Catch Me If You Can' Interviews-[Part 1: Director Amy Poe.](#)

Catch This! McLean High School's 'Catch Me If You Can' Interviews-[Part 2: Alex Stone, Jack Posey, and Lily Lord.](#)

Catch This! McLean High School's 'Catch Me If You Can' Interviews-[Part 3: Musical Director Walter \(Bobby\) McCoy.](#)

Catch This! McLean High School's 'Catch Me If You Can' Interviews-[Part 4: Choreographer Marielle Burt.](#)

Annie Bradley Ermlick

Annie Bradley Ermlick a member of SAG-AFTRA is an experienced actress, director, artistic director, technical director, choreographer, and a newly published songwriter. Someone who lives to support the arts, Annie was an Applied Voice Major at the Eastman School of Music and then went to the Musical Theatre Program at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in NYC. At AMDA, Annie got her first professional break in an Off Broadway Show "Give My Regards to Broadway" and that 286-performance run led her to a successful and prosperous professional career as a