
Tammy Wynette: Stand By Your Man at La Comedia

Posted by MWoody - 2008/01/31 16:48

Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story at La Comedia

By Mike Woody

The songs of country music are known for telling a tale of woe, and Tammy Wynette proves that theory true as her lyrics reflect the sadness of her own life. In 'Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette Story' breath is given to her music and is portrayed in front of a La Comedia audience.

Love and pain were two constants in Wynette's life and her feelings were released in her writing of songs such as Golden Ring, D-I-V-O-R-C-E and her biggest hit, Stand by Your Man.

Though I've never been a real fan of country music I do enjoy the theater, as well as the buffet dinner served at La Comedia, so I attended the show with anxious anticipation.

With a full stomach from a southern cooked meal, despite the miniscule slices always given by the meat cutter, I was ready for the musical rollercoaster.

The role of Wynette is played by Leslie Jo Bissett who most recently starred as Betty in White Christmas, as well as Patsy Cline in last years production of Always Patsy Cline. She has found a home on the La Comedia stage and embodies the persona of Wynette.

In the opening scene, after singing in church Wynette meets the first of eventually five husbands. Within minutes they are married and parents of two. Right when her career begins to hit some high notes her personal life suffers from relationship issues.

The production seems very heavily based in music, which of course makes sense for a musical. Rather than with dialogue much of the story is told through song, thankfully Bissett and the rest of the cast have pleasantly skilled voices.

Co-star, Chris Beiser plays George Jones who was Wynette's third husband and partner in several songs. He captures the drunken nature of the country music icon.

As MeeMaw, Janet Brucken brings some comic relief as the wise mother who see's the poor choices her daughter is making. The crowd often awaits every word from her spirited mouth.

The action is continuous and the setting quickly changes to fit the scene whether it needs to be a bedroom, hospital room, recording studio or a church with just some simple changes to a couple crate like furniture pieces.

Though the musical performances are strong, I felt like I was at a concert more than a dramatic production. While it did go through the life of Wynette there was really no specific highpoint the plot was reaching for. I knew from reading the program that she was married five times and died to young, nothing new was learned by seeing the show and details of her life were not deeply delved in to. The action only served as an intro for the next song rather than standing alone as a compelling story. It was shown that Wynette suffered from a variety of different ailments and was addicted to painkillers but I never found out the exact cause of her death.

The biggest response from the crowd came from a scene where Wynette's family watches a television interview where Hillary Clinton uses Tammy's name while speaking about 'standing by my man' during the Lewinsky investigation involving her husband. With the timing of the presidential primaries and the involvement of Hillary there was an unintended odd sense of politicizing when MeeMaw unleashes a vocal tirade on the Clintons.

For fans of country music, especially of Tammy Wynette the show is a must see and is enjoyable for those who aren't but the story is more in the songs than the action.

Stand By Your Man: The Tammy Wynette story will continue through March 2nd. For more information visit www.lacomedia.com and for reservations call (937) 746-4554 or 1-800-677-9505.

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