

Show will have you strutting, humming

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"All Night Strut"

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Location: Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire

Times: 1 and 8 p.m. Wednesday; 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 5 and 8:30 p.m. Saturday; 1 and 5 p.m. Sunday through Feb. 11; additional shows at 8 p.m. Dec. 19 and 26

Running time: About 1 hour, 50 minutes, including intermission

Parking: Lot adjacent to theater

Tickets: \$42, \$45

Box office: (847) 634-0200 or www.marriotttheatre.com

Rating: Suitable for all ages

You know a show's a hit when the audience can't bear even an intermission.

The announcement of a break between the first and second act of Wednesday's opening of the very entertaining "All Night Strut" elicited groans from the Marriott Theatre audience. But those groans put smiles on the faces of Marc Robin and Aaron Thielen, the creative team responsible for retooling and reviving Fran Chamas' music and dance salute to the 1930s and '40s.

Their rousing revival of Chamas' show (last staged by Robin seven years ago in its original form at the Drury Lane Theatre in Evergreen Park) so delighted the crowd they didn't want to let it go, not even for 15 minutes.

Five choreographers and six arrangers contributed, but credit for this charming diversion goes to director/choreographer Robin for his brisk, economical staging and first class choreography, and music director Doug Peck for lovely arrangements that infuse every tune - ballads included - with a sense of swing.

"Strut" establishes itself as a dance show early with an athletic, acrobatic version of "In the Mood" and a jazzy, ragtime "Minnie the Moocher" (featuring a seductive Allison Stodola). "Nightmare" an engrossing dance number notable for Sasha Vargas' modern, hard-edged, choreography, was an unexpected surprise as was Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi's elegant Cirque du Soleil-inspired aerial choreography that left audience gasping. The show concluded with an extended riff on "Fascinating Rhythm" that incorporated a taptastic solo by Billy Reeder, a sexy, Latin showstopper featuring Beverly Durand and Mark Stuart Eckstein, "Stomp" inspired moves and a hip-hop number featuring Vargas' urban cool choreography set to Michael D. Carlson's house-inspired arrangement.

Dance dominated, but swing, big band and pop standards figured prominently in the show, which benefits from soloists Susie McMonagle, Susan Moniz, Stephen Schellhardt and Jim Weitzer, who together form an exceptional, well-balanced quartet. (Singer Matt Raftery deserves mention for his sweet rendition of "I Get Ideas," and so does the versatile Matt Schwader, charming as Coda, the clown/emcee).

Thanks to McMonagle, Moniz, Schellhardt and Weitzer, "Strut's" music resonates as vividly as its dance. Their lush, playful "Java Jive"; Weitzer's dreamy "A Nightingale Sang in Barkley Square" (with a lovely pas de deux from Joe Komara and Lisa Rumbauskas); Moniz and Schellhardt's touching "I'll Be Seeing You"; and McMonagle's comic turn as "Rosie the Riveter" and her sassy lead on "Operator" send audiences away from the theater tapping their toes and humming the tunes.

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