

MEAN GIRLS

Get in losers, we're going to North Shore High!

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Based on the 2004 movie *Mean Girls*, MEAN GIRLS: THE MUSICAL revolves around Cady Heron as she deals with friends and foes as they attempt to reach "Queen Bee" status. The show incorporates love triangles, cheating, and an unexpected school bus. MEAN GIRLS: THE MUSICAL was written by Tina Fey and shares music and lyrics from Jeff Richmond and Nell Benjamin. Mean Girls first premiered at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., where it later hit Broadway at the August Wilson Theatre in April 2018. It is currently playing at the Kravis Center in West Palm Beach Florida from December 5-10th. Overall, the production viewed on December 5th was exciting and vibrant.

MEAN GIRLS: THE MUSICAL focuses on Cady Heron's life, as she navigates her newfound life in high school after she moves from her home in Kenya, Africa, where she witnessed wildlife every day. At North Shore High, Cady observes the same wildlife behavior in her new home in Evanston, Illinois, only instead of Lions eating Zebras, it's Regina tormenting Cady. As Cady eventually joins the Plastics as an in to ruin Regina George's life, she later realizes she has become what she sought to destroy.

One outstanding aspect of this production was the acting and powerful vocals. There was never a moment onstage where a performer broke character. The harmonies in "Apex Predator" and "Revenge Party" were bone-chilling. Natalie Shaw's (Cady) head voice was pure and strong, and Ethan Jih-Cook (Damian) never failed to entertain the audience with his powerful contemporary tenor voice in "Where Do You Belong" and "Stop." Alexys Morera (Janis) and Maya Petropoulos' (Regina) belts went through the stratosphere in both versions of "Somebody Gets Hurt." I loved Kristen Amanda Smith's (Gretchen) soprano operatic voice in "Meet the Plastics", along with Maryrose Brendel's (Karen) monotone, yet hilarious, vocals in "Sexy." The overall vocals in the show were superb, with impressive belts from Shaw while sitting in "Stupid With Love", to "fire" vocals from Petropoulos in "World Burn." The acting and believability of all the characters was impressive, with kudos going to the ensemble. The ensemble did a fantastic job being in character from the moment they entered the stage using their rolly-desks before "Stupid With Love." The dancing in "Whose House is This", "Where Do You Belong", and "Apex Predator" blew me away. The synchronization and their attention to detail with each move made a strong ensemble that much stronger. I absolutely loved the ensemble's ability to adapt their mannerisms and acting to that of an animal in "Apex Predator", making my favorite number in the show much more worth watching.

Scott Pask was the original set designer for this show. The setting was clearly established throughout the production with clean transitions. I greatly enjoyed the set for Kenya as it was

simple yet effective. Rather than use large sets, MEAN GIRLS uses much smaller and more practical sets that can easily be moved on and off the stage. This makes for a more effective story and song-based musical, rather than having the wow-factor of the sets do all the work for it. However, the mall scene has a large set with flashy and colorful pictures that encapsulate the show's similar vibrancy. Overall, while the set visually improved the fantastic number that is "Apex Predator", it is still appreciated that many of the sets were not up to that caliber in size, to allow the characters and the story to be the focus.

Casey Nicholaw directed MEAN GIRLS. All the areas of the musical seemed to work together well because there was never a moment where the audience couldn't understand what was going on. The jokes landed, like the flawless execution of Brendel's "Caucasian thumbs up" line, and the show's vibrant personality managed to delve into the dark and emotional bits without losing its character. Damian's hand gestures and Regina's supermodel poses were effective in establishing character, and the style of the show stayed cohesive with the storyline. One of my favorite scenes in the show was the transition of the ensemble going from student to teacher while flipping their desks ninety degrees. The direction was genius, and it was visually appealing. Additionally, I thoroughly enjoyed how the band amped up the music during "Apex Predator." It truly got the groove of the show moving and had everyone on the edge of their seats.

MEAN GIRLS' main intention is to entertain the audience with flashy numbers, riveting choreography, and showstopping vocals. It never failed to keep the audience engaged. The acting and vocals were a very strong point in this show, from Regina's show-stopping solo "World Burn" down to the core ensemble. The dancing was flavorful and enjoyable to watch. The orchestration, set, lights, props, and choreography pulled all the elements needed to make such a fantastic show that much more vibrant. This is a show everyone should come to watch!