



HELLO DOLLY!

Book by Michael Stewart

Music and Lyrics by Jerry Herman

Original Production Directed and Choreographed by Gower Champion

Garland Summer Musicals



Reviewed Performance 7/23/2017

Reviewed by [Mildred Austin](#), Associate Critic for John Garcia's THE COLUMN

HELLO DOLLY! First premiered on Broadway in 1964, with lyrics and music by Jerry Herman and book by Michael Stewart. The book was based on the 1938 comedy, THE MERCHANT OF YONKERS, by Thornton Wilder, who later revised and retitled the play THE MATCHMAKER, in 1965. The Broadway production captured 10 TONY Awards, a record (tied with SOUTH PACIFIC), which held for 10 years. But more, the show has proven an enduring musical hit, with many revivals, a film version, and an original cast album which was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2002.

The crowd which filled the Granville Arts Center in Garland on Sunday, July 23, was not disappointed with the HELLO DOLLY! They had come to see. Presented by THE GARLAND SUMMER MUSICALS, and directed by Buff Shurr, the musical filled the audience with laughter, lyrical and often toe-tapping musical numbers and sights full of movement, lights and color!

The character of Mrs. Dolly Gallagher Levi is the heart and life of this musical. The part was originally written for Ethel Merman, but she, and then Mary Martin turned the part down, though both were to play Dolly later on. Then enter Carol Channing who became THE Dolly! The character is difficult as Dolly is larger than life and she must dominate all others onstage. Channing was aided by both her height (5'9") and uniquely expressive face and voice. In this current production, Patty Granville gladly accepts the challenge as she steps into the role. Ms. Granville is tiny, very petite and she uses her voice and her expressive face to command the attention of her audience. She plays beautifully off her counterpart, Mr. Horace Vandergelder, who Dolly has set her mind to marry. Her second act entrance at the Harmonia Gardens Restaurant is definitely breathtaking and commands the audience's complete attention. The gorgeous red dress with feather headpiece is as it should be. Later, the scene in the restaurant in which she overwhelms Vandergelder, orders a huge meal and eats lustily as he vainly tries to figure out what is happening, is hilarious.

James Williams as Vandergelder is appropriately stern and cranky and establishes his character's insensitivity to love and romance in the very funny "It Takes a Woman." His voice is strong and commanding and perfectly suited opposite Ms. Granville's Dolly.

Christopher Dorf as Ambrose Kemper, the artist who wants to marry Vandergelder's niece, Ermengarde, manages the sometimes distraught, sometimes confused, sometimes completely overwhelmed character nicely. He interacts well with his counterpart Ermengarde, played by Whitnee Bomkamp, who is annoyingly hilarious as a champion weeper. It should be pointed out that all the main characters have counterparts—it is all about Love, after all.

Preston Page and Ethan Mullins are outstanding as the clerks in Vandergelder's employ, who set a plot to take a day off and explore New York. Page slips effortlessly but energetically into the role of Cornelius. His voice is strong but tender and romantic in the lovely "It Only Takes a Moment" with Lucy Shea who plays the young widow Irene Malloy.

Ethan Mullins as Barnaby Tucker, Cornelius' partner in crime, uses his entire body to bring his character to life. What a wonderfully expressive face this young actor has and he uses it so we see both the naivete and the mischievousness of his Barnaby. He is very charismatic onstage, bringing energy and vitality to his role.

Lucy Shea is charming as the young widow who, though seemingly the supposed match for Vandergelder, falls for the handsome and attentive Cornelius. All this is, of course, the result of the machinations of our matchmaker, Dolly! Shea's beautiful soprano vocals enhance "Ribbons Down My Back" and, of course, the "Moment" duet with Cornelius.

Her partner at the hat shop, Minnie Fay, is played by Caitlin Jones. Jones pulls off the naïve sweetness of her character but also manages excitement and vitality in her singing and dancing and interplay with her love interest, Barnaby.

Special notice should be giving the actors who attend carefully and completely to make minor roles

memorable to the audience. Such is the case with Steven E. Beene, who adds to correct pompousness and imperiousness to the role of Rudolph Reisenweber, the head waiter at the Harmonia Gardens. He and his wait staff are incredible in the "Waiter's Gallop." It is so carefully synchronized by choreographer Kelly McCain, it makes one's head spin!

And Hamp Holcomb as the judge who attempts to sort out the melee Dolly brings about at the fabled restaurant, is hilariously both stern and sentimental as it turns out. The singing and dancing ensembles in this production are amazing. Dancers sometimes forget they have faces, but not here! Their faces are lit up with excitement that enhances the beautiful timing of their footwork. Bravo to all of you!

The set is perfect. Simple actually, but exactly the backdrop for the color and constant movement of the actors and ensembles. Love, love the train that carries everyone to the Big City! And, of course, gotta love the famous stairway where Dolly makes her entrance in Act II at the Harmonia Gardens. Again, simple enough to be elegant and not overwhelm our main character who owns the stairs as she enters. The use of the rope lights is again a simple but ingenious way to mimic the lights of the Gardens.

Costumes are period appropriate and strikingly colorful. The hats of the period can always prove a problem as they are (1) large and therefore (2) are prone to hide faces if director is not careful. But Buff Shurr is an old hand at this and his staging is spot on. The hats are not always worn as they would have been but sometimes dramatic license wins out. There are some very minor blocking problems where actors upstage their companions, but it is so very trivial and did not take away from the caliber of this production.

Cannot leave without high praise for the Musical Director/Conductor, Mark Mullino. The orchestra sounds unbelievably huge with the music filling the large theatre. Suffice is to say, this music production was absolutely, unequivocally professional.

Ms. Granville is a beloved Dolly but she is also, I also know, a beloved community member. The focus of the Garland Summer Musicals, which she heads, is listed in the program as an educational partnership with Eastfield College, a member of the Dallas County Community College District. Through this partnership, students are provided scholarships to learn the craft of Musical Theatre. And an intern program exists between GSM and Tarleton State University. Granville, in the program for the show, brilliantly extends her thanks to everyone in the show. This reviewer would like to extend her thanks to Patty Granville for all she has done and continues to do to bring good musical theatre to the community and patrons. Bravo!

HELLO DOLLY!
Granville Arts Center
300 North Fifth Street
Garland, TX 75040

972-205-2790

Friday July 28, 8:00 pm

Saturday, July 29, 8:00 pm

Sunday, July 30, 2:30 pm