

Amazing Dreamcoat is a dazzling success

What a huge, glittering, well-produced show Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat is.

Opening Wednesday for a five-day run at Centre in the Square, Joseph is jammed full with good music, wonderful performances, laughs galore, poignant moments, intriguing choreography, and so much variety that the time speeds by and it's over before you know it.

David Osmond stars as Joseph with six of his brothers in the cast as, appropriately enough, Joseph's brothers, and it would be hard to imagine better casting.

David has excellent stage presence, and it's easy to see why he is the lead singer when he and his brothers perform as the Osmonds-Second Generation. From his opening song Any Dream Will Do, Osmond demonstrated a firm, resonant voice which he knows how to use — with subtlety and control.

Osmond has great timing and a sense of humor which shines through everything he does on stage. Another of his great features was Close Every Door.

From the simple, elementary school version of Joseph some 30 years ago, this full-blown extravaganza has wonderful sets and lighting as well as being nearly three times as long, all of the songs being written by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice as the cantata evolved into a musical.

Jennifer Shrader played the part of the Narrator, supplying the continuity and acting as a catalyst for several scenes. She has a beautiful, clear voice, but could have been served better by the sound system. She was equalized by the sound equipment far too much in the higher frequencies, giving a shrill quality to her voice, causing some of the lyrics to blur.

The Pharaoh, played by Eric A. Martsoff in pure Elvis style — thank you very much — was a showstopper. What a dynamic performer, and he had The

King's every movement and vocal trick down cold, all done with his tongue firmly in his cheek.

Another gem was the Benjamin Calypso, the solo done by Terrence Clowe in a parody of Harry Belafonte's songs of Jamaica. This, too, brought the house down.

The whole show is virtually a blend of Broadway musical and English pantomime, and this was illustrated to perfection by the Country and Western twist on One More Angel in Heaven, soloist Ray Benson doing a fabulous job with the satirical humor of the piece.

The Cafe Canaan scene, done in Parisian style by Nathan Klau complete with beret and Maurice Chevalier

accent, was another of the amusing twists, and the tango which followed was a hoot.

In fact, all of the movement and choreography was ingeniously designed and superbly executed.

The brothers Osmond were marvelous as the brothers of Joseph, aided by a few other performers to bring the numbers up to biblical proportions. Their movement, timing and comedy — check out the shades — were right up there with their vocal group harmony — everything solid and well-balanced.

The Dream Choir were from St. Timothy's School in Kitchener, and they not only sang well and in tune, they provided the onstage audience to whom the Narrator related the story of Joseph, and before whom the tale unfolded. They could have been miked a bit better.

The pit orchestra was one of the best yet to play the Centre.

As modern pit orchestras are, it was a blend of synthesized and acoustic sound, but never sounded artificial. An extremely musical performance.

As this is only the second stop on their tour, there are a few bugs yet to be ironed out, and one of them is sound. There were times when the voices were overshadowed by the orchestra, and several people at the back of the auditorium stated that the vocal sound wasn't reaching them at all.

This should not be a problem to adjust, provided someone with both ears and musical savvy is present to supervise the readjustment, and they have six more shows to get it right.

But make no mistake, this dazzling extravaganza is one of the best shows ever to play Centre in the Square.



Harry Currie

STAGE



David Osmond brings a firm, resonant voice to play in this glittering stage extravaganza.

Stage

Who: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat
 Where: Centre in the Square
 Day: To Sunday
 Time: 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2 p.m. Sat. and Sun.
 Phone: 578-1570, 1-800-265-8977