

“Bright Star” at Peppermint Creek is Beautiful and Evocative

*Review by Jane Zussman
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Peppermint Creek has opened its first season at the Central United Methodist Church next to the Capitol, downtown with a fabulous show that takes full advantage of the new space. **Bright Star**, by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell, is a new musical inspired by an old, true, story of a baby, lost and found. It is, as billed, "a sweeping tale of love and redemption set against the rich backdrop of the American South." The show vacillates smoothly between 1923-34 and 1945-46. It combines tragedy and redemption and pays tribute to adoptive parents and our universal longing for love and family.

Director Chad Swan Badgero and Choreographer Karyn Perry deftly manage the 16 bodies onstage to magically change eras and locales with versatile rolling set pieces and choreography that is a beautiful and evocative expression of the bluegrass music (under the direction of Seth Burk on keyboard leading his six piece band. Kudos to Bill Bartilson, sound engineer for mic'ing/balancing it all.) The blocking, set-moving and choreography are all the more demanding and remarkable when you consider that the audience is on two facing sides of the space and there is no “front.”

Amanda Dekatch is sensational as Alice. Her singing voice would do both Broadway and Nashville proud — and she breaks our hearts with her acting, as well, spanning the demands of her “time/age travel” and the emotional demands of this role. The entire cast and ensemble are a worthy frame around her. It was great to see (and hear) Matthew Bill back onstage as a worthy foil for Amanda. Ben Cassidy and Sally Hecksel were adorable, as usual; Grace Rosen and Taylor Jeffers added comic flair.

Note - this is a “hit” and was — and probably will be — sold out soon; there are only about 80 seats available; so make your reservations asap — and arrive early. The new venue has street parking and a parking ramp around the block north of the church (215 N. Capitol)

