

Stand-in rocks ‘The Wild Party’

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By [David Winkelstern](#)

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The opening performance of Peppermint Creek Theatre’s “The Wild Party” almost didn’t happen.

Thanks to the talent and bravery of Sally Hecksel, the show went on.

Hecksel was originally cast as a no-name ensemble player.

After Bronsyn Lee Sacker was struck with viral laryngitis the day “The Wild Party” was to open, Hecksel became a principal character.

"I had an eight-hour rehearsal in the early afternoon until we opened the house to patrons," Hecksel said. "As soon as the news was given to the cast, I was met with this insane amount of support that I've only experienced a couple of times in my life."

Despite little preparation, Hecksel commanded the character. Thanks to some clever placements of line sheets in various “albums,” hidden pages around the set and in a bathtub.

Fourteen other strong players on the stage inside the Miller Auditorium help make “The Wild Party” a crazy extravaganza.

The musical with lyrics and music by Andrew Lippa is set in Manhattan in the summer of 1929. "The Wild Party" combines debauchery, merriment, disturbing bits, comedy, violence and delightful decadence.

Steamy, scene-stealing solos by Laura Croff as Madeleine True and Carly Jacobs as the not-so-sober floozy, Kate, are spotlight moments of the two-hour show.



Brennan Hattaway as Black is another example of his chameleon-like ability to occupy a different character.

Kameron Going, who played Dr. Jekyll in Riverwalk's "Jekyll and Hyde," portrays a similarly tormented man, Burrs, who shifts from tenderness to cruelty.

A swinging six-piece band — complete with muffled horns, rolling drums and jazzy keyboards by John Dale Smith — keeps the joint jumping throughout most of the show.

Mostly appropriate and elegant costumes designed by Katy Kettles and a massive, two-level set by Ben Cassidy take us back to a time when style and rebellious acts were common. Anna Szabo's gaudy set dressings and props fit the era.

Although some of the men's haircuts are out of step with the period, the women's hairdos are charmingly authentic.

Exposed, modern tattoos on both genders are occasional distractions.

Karyn Perry's intricate and tricky, fullcast choreography is an impressive centerpiece of the show. The fancy footwork is a treat to see. Cassidy's direction also manages to disperse and connect the numerous characters in clever ways.

No matter where the actors are, they always give movements and actions worth looking at.

"The Wild Party" \$20 general, \$15 student/senior 8 p.m., Thursday, Dec. 6 8 p.m., Friday, Dec. 7 8 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 8 8 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 9 Miller Performing Arts Center 6025 Curry Lane, Lansing www.peppermintcreek.org (517) 927-3016