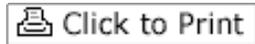




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Schoolhouse Rock Live Too!

Greenway Arts Alliance at the Greenway Court Theatre

Reviewed by Jon Steely

June 17, 2009



PHOTO CREDIT
Ed Krieger

These days, commercials for snacks and games still run during Saturday morning children's television programming, but what's missing are short, educational pieces set to catchy tunes. The use of precious television airtime for teaching children grammar, math, and history instead of forcing product marketing in their tiny faces seemed all but lost, until TheatreBam Chicago adapted the George Newall–Tom Yohe series and brought it to the stage. Now, director-choreographer Rick Sparks offers a rollicking sequel to the 2007 musical based on the classic, Emmy Award–winning 1970s animated television series—with book and lyrics by Scott Ferguson, original music by Dennis Curley.

A recession-battered, rundown diner is in danger of closing, unless six principles—Lucky (Harley Jay), Julie (Jayme Lake), Cookie (Michael Lopez), Rebecca (Kelly Meyersfield), Nina (Lisa Tharps), and Tom (Brian Wesley Turner)—can come up with a way to save it. Schoolhouse Rock memories (clips from the original cartoon

play throughout) and fun and instructional Schoolhouse Rock songs (most of which are toe-tappers) inspire ideas to keep the diner from shutting down. These ideas are presented and rejected until, finally, one sure-fire plan materializes that will save the day and keep the diner open to serve coffee, pie, and education to its customers.

Standing out even among this talented cast, backed by a tight, three-piece band, are Tharps, with her vocal prowess and priceless facial expressions, and Lake, entering on roller skates, who remains a compelling presence throughout the performance.

Sparks' charming and energetic offering is and isn't a children's play. Those who remember the '70s remember Schoolhouse Rock and will be pleasantly surprised to clearly recall songs like "Conjunction Junction" and "I'm Just a Bill." Those who can't remember the '70s—or even the '90s, for that matter—will experience this production as a fresh, vibrant, and playful musical where the lessons learned are just as relevant now as they were then.

Presented by Greenway Arts Alliance at the Greenway Court Theatre, 544 N. Fairfax Ave., L.A. May 30–July 26. Fri., 7:30 p.m.; Sat., 4 and 7:30 p.m.; Sun., 4 p.m. (Dark Sat., June 6 7:30 and Sat., July 4, 4 and 7:30 p.m.) (323) 655-7679, ext. 100 or www.schoolhouserockla.com.

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