

## 'Footloose' brings back best of the '80s

If you feel nostalgic when an '80s hit comes on the radio, Footloose at the Chemainus Theatre Festival is a must-see this summer.

ANDREA RONDEAU / Tue Jun 14th, 2016 7:00pm / E N T E R T



If you feel nostalgic when an '80s hit comes on the radio, or even if you just love a good musical, Footloose at the Chemainus Theatre Festival is a must-see this summer.

I admit, I was a little skeptical as to how well the pop hits that were so memorable from the 1984 film would translate live onto the stage in a more Broadway format, but it turns out I had no reason to be nervous. They're one of the best parts of the show, punctuating and outshining the more traditional 'musical' tunes that have been written to fill in the gaps and help tell the story, though there are a couple of standouts here as well.

Songs like 'Footloose', 'Somebody's Eyes', 'Let's Hear it for the Boy', 'Almost Paradise' and especially 'Holding out for a Hero' will have you searching for an old cassette tape soundtrack when you get out of the theatre.

It's a great credit to the director, Barbara Tomasic, musical director, Nico Rhodes, choreographer, Julie Tomaino, and performers that the heart and soul of these hits remain intact and have you wanting to jump out of your seat to show off some moves.

Speaking of the performances, there are some great ones to anchor the show. The entire cast shows off their talents and has moments to shine, but there are a few truly emotional performances that really take the show to the next level. These come primarily from Kaleigh Gorka as Ariel, the female lead and the actors playing her mother and father. Gorka embodies the wild child teenager doing everything she can to rebel against her strict preacher daddy who has the whole town in his grip, and her own pain. Her delivery of 'Holding out for a Hero' is a showstopper.

Andrew Wheeler is simply perfect as Ariel's father Reverend Moore. He's the villain of the piece, but the audience can't help but feel for him as he struggles to figure out what's right in the face of the tragic death of his son.

He's matched by an equally strong performance by Cailin Stadnyk as his wife Vi. From her first moments the warmth and wry humour of this character shines through, the perfect foil for Ariel and the Reverend, but nevertheless a person in her own right, with her own feelings to work through.

This trio really embodies the gritty, small-town feel of the original film.

The other main family is our hero, Ren, played by Justin Stadnyk, and his newly single mother Ethel, played by Sarah Carlé. Stadnyk slides easily into the role of the slightly goofy out-of-towner who is wrongly labelled a troublemaker, and plays well the increasing frustration of the character as he builds towards breaking out to fight for his cause — getting the town to allow a school dance. He's great on his feet, too, and displays some admirable singing chops to deliver in numbers like 'I'm Free'.

Carlé is great as the mother trying to build a new life and take care of her teenage son by herself, but acutely aware she is dependent on the charity of others.

One of the most poignant moments in the show comes when she, Vi and Ariel do a piece called 'Learning to be Silent', a powerfully feminist statement about how women can be silenced and become bystanders in their own lives.

In supporting roles Marisa Gold, as Ariel's best friend Rusty, and Nathan Kay as her would-be love interest, and Ren's best friend, Willard, are a fun counterpoint to the serious drama of the principals. They make 'Let's Hear it for the Boy' a particularly memorable number.

The show's ending has been changed from the film, but it feels earned and flows naturally from the character development throughout the play.

Footloose is a great night at the theatre because it's a lot of fun, a bit of nostalgia, and manages to explore emotions that are universal and timeless. This one's never going out of style.

Footloose runs from June 10 to Aug. 27. Call 1-800-565-7738 to book tickets.



## M o s t R e a d

---

1 Disappearance of Duncan's Desmond Peter highlighted for Missing Children's Day

---

2 Duncan's Brandon Walker has a front-row seat for Predators' playoff drive

---

3 Mount Tzouhalem goes live around the world with Google Trekker

---

4 Video: Donnay Drive development gets green light

---