

'Monty Python's Spamalot' at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre

by **Ron Heneghan** on August 2, 2014

A Silly and Satisfying "Spamalot" in Annapolis

It was perfect weather on opening night for the outdoor [Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre's](#) *Monty Python's Spamalot*. Now in its 49th year, ASGT finishes their 2014 season with a silly and spirited production that features strong performances, a tight musical ensemble, grand and plentiful costumes, and a joyous showmanship that was funny and satisfying.

The cast of 'Spamalot.' Photo by Alyssa Bouma.

Spamalot brings us the classic Arthurian Legend through the lens of the famed comedy troupe Monty Python. King Arthur gathers knights for his famed round table, and they head on a quest for the Holy Grail. He and Sir Robin, Sir Lancelot, Sir Galahad, and Sir Bedevere meet ferocious rabbits, knights who say "Ni" and dying peasants who insist they are "not dead yet."

Debuting on Broadway in 2005, Eric Idle and John Du Prez's *Spamalot*, which was "lovingly ripped off from the motion picture Monty Python and the Holy Grail" earned 14 Tony nominations and three wins, including Best Musical.

Director Jeffery Lesniak makes good use of the simple set and sets the right tone for the production; exuberant and silly. He is well-supported by strong work from the artistic staff. Rikki Howie Lacewell's choreography is simple and clever for the choral numbers, and effectively highlights several superb solo dancers (Nick Carter and Austin Heemstra). Linda Swann's costume design gets all the right touches. She manages the

royalty with the King and his Knights, the glitzy with The Camelot Dancers/Laker Girls, the lowly with the peasants and guards, and the completely unnecessary with the entire company in a village of Finland, distinctively French (maids, mimes, and can-can girls), and slightly Yiddish.

Steve Przybylski assembles a crack seven-piece orchestra whose strength never overwhelms the fine singers and Ken Kimble's conducting was crisp and playful.

Ruben Vellecoop gives King Arthur a naive dignity and a compelling politeness that keeps the through line moving forward. This King Arthur is never completely frazzled; his "I'm All Alone" is bittersweet and his duet with The Lady of the Lake "The Song That Goes Like This (Reprise)" is more cool than passionate.

Joshua Mooney tackles several roles with aplomb. He is devilishly sinister as The French Taunter, and finds all the right levels of Sir Lancelot: ignorant, fearless, uncomfortable with his latent homosexuality, accepting and embracing of same. Mr. Mooney deftly manages the dialects of his characters, including the Scottish Tim the Enchanter.

Alice Goldberg (The Lady of the Lake) gives a fine performance. Her singing is first rate in "Come With Me" and she plays delightfully with several musical stylings in "The Diva's Lament."

David Merrill plays Sir Galahad with a light touch. His duet with Ms. Goldberg ("The Song That Goes Like This") finds him in good voice and he plays the comedy with nuance. When he appears later in the show as Prince Herbert's Father, he displays terrific comic timing with the two guards (Steven Baird and Fred Fletcher-Jackson).

Mr. Baird provides solid support to the show with his distinct

and steadfast servant to the King, Patsy. His characterization is wide-eyed and ignorant, while he deftly finds all the physical comedy in the role. Mr. Fletcher-Jackson makes Sir Robin earnest and sprightly (and easily soiled, in an ongoing gag). His “You Won’t Succeed on Broadway” is exuberant and fun. The potty humor runneth over with DJ Wojciehowski’s stinky turn as Sir Bevedere, the Strangely Flatulent.

Cast members of ‘Spamalot.’ Photo by Alyssa Bouma.

Austin Heemstra shows a superb range of characterization, going through four distinct roles in the show. His Not Dead Fred has a fearless physicality, as does his Minstrel, while his singing as the Minstrel and the effeminate Prince is clear and sweet.

This is a show not for the politically correct. The cheeky humor lovingly mocks religion, sexual orientation, Jewish theatregoers and producers (“You won’t succeed on Broadway if you don’t have any Jews”), political systems, class struggles, and theater itself. *Spamalot* is not for the stoic.

The Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre provides a unique and breezy setting for this fine show. This is a silly *Spamalot* that is sincere and locally flavored, and that is sure to improve over the course of their run.

Running Time: Two hours and a 15-minute intermission.

Monty Python’s Spamalot plays through August 31, 2014 at Annapolis Summer Garden Theatre-143 Compromise Street, in Annapolis, MD. For tickets, call the box office at (410) 268-9212, or purchase them [online](#).

About Ron Heneghan

Ron Heneghan is a Maryland native. He attended the University of Maryland where he received his B.S. in Journalism, then received his MFA from the University of Washington in Seattle. He lives in Baltimore and scratches together a living by working as an actor, director, writer, and educator.

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