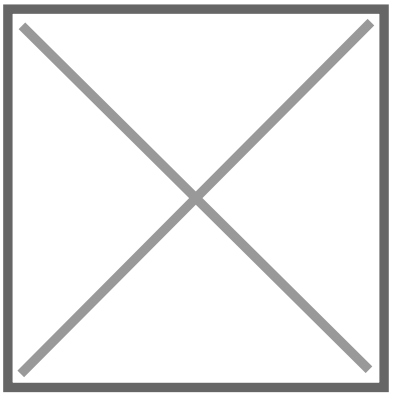


MJ the Musical: Moonwalking that Just May â??Heal the Worldâ?•

Description

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SALT LAKE CITYâ??*MJ the Musical*, directed and choreographed by **Christopher Wheeldon**, with book by **Lynn Nottag**, is a thrilling homage to the King of Pop, **Michael Jackson**, portrayed brilliantly by **Roman Banks**, that encapsulates his unparalleled legacy and many electrifying performances from his life. From his early days with the **Jackson 5** to his groundbreaking solo career, this production takes audiences on an exhilarating journey through iconic and cultural music. This musical boasts numerous beloved hit songs and nostalgic choreography. However, what truly captivates me about *MJ the Musical* is its ability to intertwine the narrative seamlessly with these songs. Rather than merely serving as a backdrop for chart-toppers, the storyline enriches the familiar lyrics, offering the audience deeper layers of meaning. â??Price of Fameâ?• sets the scene for the show, initiating the narrative journey with stunning dancing by the cast and becomes a recurring theme throughout the musical that returns poignantly throughout the play and MJâ??s life. By the time the last song arrives, our perception of MJ, the pop star, has changed.

So picture this: itâ??s 1992, and weâ??re chilling in a rehearsal studio in L.A. where Michael Jackson and his crew are gearing up for the Dangerous World Tour. But it ainâ??t all smooth sailing. You got a stressed-out producer, a financial manager freaking out about the budget, and a tour director just trying to keep it all together. And to top it off, thereâ??s this MTV crew led by Rachel (**Mary Kate Moore**) and her cameraman, Alejandro (**Daâ??Von T. Moody**), trying to fix MJâ??s tarnished image. But guess what? They end up digging up more drama than they bargained for!

> Michael Jackson dances in a fedora with the ensemble in a rehearsal studio scene from MJ the Mus
> Roman Banks as MJ and the cast of the MJ First National Tour. Photo by Matthew Murphy.

MJ the Musical ainâ??t just your run-of-the-mill jukebox show. Itâ??s a deep dive into the life and times of one of the music industryâ??s biggest legends. You get these slick flashbacks to Michaelâ??s early days, mixing in with the tour prep and some juicy interviews with Rachel. And let me tell ya, it ainâ??t just about belting out hits. The story behind the songs adds a whole new layer of meaning to those catchy tunes. Youâ??ll nod to â??ABCâ?• one minute, fangirl to â??Thrillerâ?• another, and get hit right in the feels with â??Human Natureâ?• the next.

Now, letâ??s talk talent. The cast? Phenomenal. First, letâ??s give a round of applause to the actors playing Michael. **Roman Banks** has accomplished something very few actors or dancers could pull off: dancing or singing alone like MJ is impressive, but combined at the level Banks is doing is just incredible. Banks steps into MJâ??s shoes seamlessly, moonwalks like no oneâ??s business, and knocks this role out of the park. He sounds exactly like Michael when singing and talking in his acting scenes. The attention to detail is top-notch. It reminded me of **Rami Malekâ??s** impersonation of **Freddie Mercury** in **Bohemian Rhapsody**; however, Malek doesnâ??t sing in the movie. Banks has the voice and the moves; he is the whole package.

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> *~Rhetorical Review~*

Brandon Lee Harris (who portrays Teen/Younger MJ) is impressive. He takes us on a musical journey from Motown to pop royalty, and I loved every second of it. With uncanny vocal prowess and a mesmerizing stage presence, Harris captures the essence of Jackson with authenticity and reverence.

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Michael Jackson performs surrounded by dancers holding vinyl records in MJ the Musical. Brandon Lee Harris as â??Michaelâ?? and the cast of the MJ First National Tour. Photo by Matthew Murphy.

This show features one of the strongest ensemble of dancers in a Broadway musical I have seen: they bring so many iconic MJ moves to life, not to mention countless other styles as they go back and forth between timelines to the Jackson 5 brothersâ?? timeline, and they nail every move while bringing the drama. Beyond its dazzling spectacle, *MJ the Musical* reflects Jacksonâ??s enduring impact on music and culture. Through his groundbreaking artistry and boundary-pushing creativity, Jackson transcended genres and boundaries, leaving an indelible mark on generations of fans worldwide. This show serves as a celebration of MJâ??s enduring legacy, reminding audiences of the power of music to unite and inspire.

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Michael Jackson and a documentary filmmaker sit in director's chairs during an interview scene in M Roman Banks as â??MJâ?? and Mary Kate Moore as â??Rachelâ?? in the MJ First National Tour. Photo by Matthew Murphy.

The vocals are smooth! Theyâ??re killing it. And letâ??s hear it for **Devin Bowles**, who seamlessly switches from MJâ??s abusive dad to MJâ??s tour manager in mere seconds. Seriously impressive! And **Anatasia Talley**, who plays MJâ??s mom, has several standout solos where her voice shines. I wish we could have heard her featured more because her voice is phenomenal; sheâ??s got pipes!

A man in black confronts Michael Jackson in the rehearsal studio in MJ the Musical.
Devin Bowles as â??Robâ?? and Roman Banks as â??MJâ?? in the MJ First National Tour.
Photo by Matthew Murphy.

The castâ??s talent left a lasting impression on me. The Jackson 5 brothersâ??**Josh A. Dawson, Malcolm Miles Young, Jay Mckenzie, Jacobi Kai, Brion Marquis Watson, Bryce A. Holmes** â??brought â??ABCâ?• and â??I Want You Backâ?• and other numbers to life with vibrant flair to portray a poignant vulnerability in the family dynamics. The MTV crew, led by Mooreâ??s Rachel, skillfully confronts difficult truths during her rendition of â??Human Nature,â?• which sparks one of the most memorable conversations in the show. Amidst it all, the tour staff and financial advisors delicately balance frustration and concern, highlighting the humanity inherent in every scene.

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> *~Rhetorical Review~*

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Young Michael Jackson sings with his hands clasped as his mother embraces him from behind in M
Roman Banks as MJ and Anastasia Talley as Kathrine Jackson in the MJ First National Tour. Photo by Matthew Murphy.

In addition to its stunning cast, *MJ the Musical* boasts a top-notch production and creative team: Scenic Design by two-time Tony and Emmy Award winner **Derek McLane**, Lighting Design by seven-time Tony Award winner **Natasha Katz**, Costume Design by Tony and Emmy Award winner **Paul Tazewell**, Sound Design by Tony Award winner **Gareth Owen**, Hair & Wig Design by two-time Emmy Award nominee **Charles G. LaPointe** and Makeup Design by Emmy nominee, **Joe Dulude II**. The creative team also features musical supervision by Tony Award nominee David Holcenberg, orchestrations and arrangements by David Holcenberg, Tony Award winner Jason Michael Webb, and music direction by **Victor Simonson**. An element that made this musical pop was the creative Projection Design by two-time Tony Award nominee **Peter Nigrini**; they were the most high-tech and detailed projections I have ever seen in a show, adding so much color and layers to every scene.

Spotify- MJ the Musical

Within the spectrum of emotional resonance spanning from ominous to enlightening, *MJ the Musical* emerges as an auditory and visual spectacle, conveying a narrative accessible to audiences of diverse age demographics (recommended for children aged eight and above). The production adeptly functions as both a retrospective for longstanding enthusiasts and a primer for those less acquainted with Michael Jacksonâ??s oeuvre beyond the ubiquitous â??Thriller.â?• The rumors and allegations that have long shadowed MJâ??s persona are eclipsed in this show by a renewed emphasis on his musical prowess.

MJ the Musical deftly navigates a delicate equilibrium, foregrounding Jacksonâ??s musical legacy while tactfully acknowledging historical controversies from multiple vantage points, refraining from exacerbating past traumas. Departing the venue, I was enraptured by the melodic sequences and impressed by the remade tracks and added harmonies. This is a valuable musical for many reasons; it

cultivates a deeper empathy toward MJ when so many unkind and untrue narratives spread toward the end of his life. This musical has the potential to undo damage to his name, challenging the scrutiny of public figures.

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Podcast about MJ

Christopher Wheeldonâ??s stunning choreography pays homage to Jacksonâ??s signature moves while infusing them with a contemporary flair. Each dancer embodies the essence of Jackson, capturing his unparalleled charisma and magnetic stage presence. *MJ the Musical* offers an unforgettable experience that will leave you singing, dancing, and moonwalking down the aisles. No doubt, MJâ??s spirit lives on in this electrifying tribute, making it a must-see for music lovers of all ages. Perhaps, while being entertained, you will find humanity in MJ that you had not before seen.

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So, if you want to experience a night of killer music, dazzling performances, and a lot of MJ magic, you better grab a ticket to MJ the Musical. Trust me, itâ??s one show you donâ??t want to miss!

Ensemble:

Headshots of four MJ the Musical touring cast members.

Headshots of four more MJ the Musical touring cast members.

Headshots of four MJ the Musical cast members, including the actor playing young Michael.

Headshots of four MJ the Musical swings and ensemble members.

Headshots of three MJ the Musical ensemble members.
www.mjthemusical.com

Zions Bank Broadway at the Eccles Presents*MJ the Musical* by Lynn Nottage
The George S. and Dolores DorÃ© Eccles Theater, 131 Main St, Salt Lake City, UT 84111
February 27 to March 3, 2024 (times vary)
Tickets: $79â??$179
Contact: 801-355-2787 (ARTS)

www.mjthemusical.com ~ MJ Instagram Page ~ MJ Facebook Page~Twitter
Broadway at the Eccles Facebook Page

The MJ First National Tour is general managed by **Bespoke Theatricals.** The stage management team is led by Production Stage Manager **Shawn Pennington**, Stage Manager **Geoff Maus,** and Assistant

Stage Manager **Maya Bhatnagar** and **Xavier Khan**. The company management team is led by Company Manager **Justin T. Scholl** and Associate Company Manager **Tameka Sadler.**

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