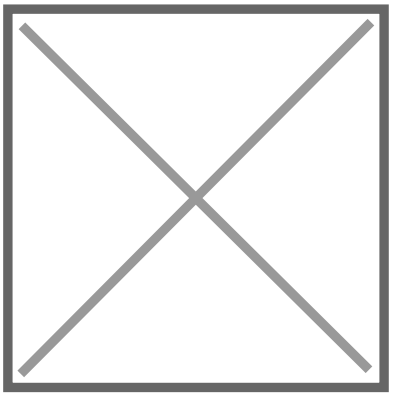


â??We Sing It Anywayâ?•: Hadestown Review â?? Repetition, Labor, and a Jazz-Infused Greek Tragedy

Description

default watermark

Salt Lake City, UTâ??We know how the story ends, and yet *Hadestown* asks us to return to it anywayâ??knowingly. The tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice unfolds not as a revelation, but as a repetition, one that gathers meaning through retelling. In this way, the musical frames storytelling as a kind of labor, shaped by memory, belief, and the fragile conditions of performance itself. Each telling does not seek to change the ending, but to make it felt againâ??to test what still resonates in its return.

In its latest touring production at Eccles Theater, *Hadestown*â??with music, lyrics, and book by **AnaÃ¯s Mitchell** and direction by **Keenan Tyler Oliphant**, with choreography by **T. Oliver Reid**â??arrives with the weight of its reputation as an eight-time Tony Award-winning musical known for its fusion of American folk, jazz, and mythic storytelling. And yet, what this production makes visible is not only the endurance of that story, but the delicacy required to carry it forwardâ??how easily its balance can shift, and how much care it takes, moment to moment, to hold it in place.



(L to R) Jayna Westcoatt (Fate), Nickolaus ColÃ³n (Hades), Miriam Navarrete (Fate), Hawa Kamara (Eurydice), and Gia Keddy (Fate) in Hadestown North American Tour, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Iteration, Not Diminishment

In this particular iteration, the productionâ??s visual impact feels differently calibrated rather than diminished. Having seen a previous tour, I found that earlier version to be more visually immersive, particularly in its use of spatial movement and mechanical transformation. But what stands out here is not simply what is absent, but how the absence shifts the experience of the show itself.

The stagingâ??in the earlier touring iterationâ??relied on a turntable and lift to physically articulate movement between worlds, giving Orpheusâ??s journey a sense of continuous motion and descent. Here, without those mechanisms, the transitions are less literal. The journey is less engineered through machinery and instead suggested through light, choreography, and proximity. The world of *Hadestown* feels less like a system you can see working, and more like one you are invited to imagine into being.

And that difference mattersâ??not because one version is better, but because each asks something different of its audience.

This sense of iteration is not incidentalâ??it is embedded in the work itself. As playwright and composer **AnaÃ¯s Mitchell**reflects, even after the showâ??s Broadway run, its text has continued to evolve. â??Honestly, I didnâ??t even think it was â??allowedâ?? for me to change the lyrics on Broadway,â?• she notes, describing how a revised version of â??Epic III,â?• first introduced in London, eventually made its way back to the Broadway production through performer advocacy.

The updated bridge shifts the song toward a more intimate, empathetic register:

default watermark

> I know how it is because he is like me
> I know how it is to be left all alone
> Thereâ??s a hole in his arms where the world used to be
> When Persephoneâ??s gone
> His work never done, his war never won
> Will go on forever whatever the cost
> â??Cause the thing that heâ??s building his walls around
> Is already lost

What changes here is not simply language, but orientationâ??from indictment to identification, from distance to relation. Mitchell herself frames the work less as a fixed musical and more as something closer to a living tradition: â??Is anything ever finished? â?¦ itâ??s an ancient myth thatâ??s been retold a million times. It feels almost like a folk song, that evolves and gathers verses and loses verses over the centuries.â?• The language here shifts toward recognitionâ??â??I know how it isâ?¦ to be left all aloneâ?•â??reframing power not through distance, but through shared vulnerability and recognition.

Seen in this light, the differences between productionsâ??and even the moments of unevennessâ??do not signal a work falling short of a stable form, but one that resists being fully fixed. Each iteration does not simply reproduce the story; it re-negotiates how it is carried.



Nickolaus ColÃ³n (Hades), Jose Contreras (Orpheus), and Namisa Mdlalose Bizana (Persephone) in Hadestown North American Touring Company, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Story as Labor

From the outset, the show frames storytelling as an act of beliefâ??fragile, unfinished, and necessary. Orpheus is not a hero with a completed vision, but a figure still searching for the song that might restore the world: a promise that â??when itâ??s doneâ?¦ spring will come.â?• This sense of incompletion is central. *Hadestown* resists the myth as fixed, instead presenting it as something continually rebuilt in the face of environmental instability, doubt, and lossâ??â??the weather ainâ??t the way it used to

be.â?• The story is not simply toldâ??it is continually labored into being, and it is built into the language of the show itself: â??he keeps his head lowâ?¦ he keeps his back bending,â?• a world where work is continuous, exhausting, and never fully resolved.

That emphasis on labor extends into the underworld itself, where Hadesâ?? domain operates as a system of repetition, discipline, and control. The now-iconic sequenceâ??â??Why do we build the wall?â?•â??unfolds as a chilling exercise in rhetorical conditioning. The workersâ?? call-and-responseâ??â??We build the wall to keep us freeâ?•â??reveals not only oppression, but the internalization of its language. The wall becomes both structure and ideology, sustained through repetition rather than reason. The question is not whether the wall worksâ??the question is whether we recognize ourselves in the act of building it.

default watermark


default watermark

Nickolaus ColÃ³n (Hades) in Hadestown North American Tour, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Opening Night: A Performance in Process

Live performance is inherently iterative, shaped through ongoing calibration between performers, technical systems, and audience response. Early performances often carry precisely this kind of unevenness, suggesting not failure, but a production still settling into its rhythm.

And indeed, in this performance, the second act finds stronger footing. As the narrative deepens and the stakes sharpenâ??particularly in the descent to the underworld and the final journey backâ??the production gains momentum and emotional clarity. The pacing tightens, the ensemble feels more cohesive, and the thematic weight of the story lands with greater force. By the time Orpheus begins the long walk out of the underworldâ??bound by the condition that he must not look backâ??the performance shifts from spectacle to something more intimate and psychological. The true danger is not Hades, but doubt itselfâ??internal, persistent, and impossible to outrun. As the show frames it, â??the dog you really got to dread is the one that howls inside your head.â?•

default watermark

Even with its earlier inconsistencies, the production ultimately resonated with its audience. The performance concluded with a strong, sustained standing ovationâ??a reminder that *Hadestown*â??s emotional core remains powerful, even as this iteration continues settling into its full rhythm. Despite its moments of unevenness, this is a production well worth seeingâ??one that still moves, still resonates, and still reminds us why this story endures.



Hawa Kamara (Eurydice) and Jose Contreras (Orpheus) in Hadestown North American Tour, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Performance as Relationship

It is within this shifting visual and thematic framework that the productionâ??s strengths become most visibleâ??particularly in its performances and musical world.

Mitchell achieves a score that blends New Orleans jazz, blues, and Americana into a sonic landscape that feels both nostalgic and strangely post-apocalyptic. The music is new, yet carries the familiarity of something you feel you have always known.

Under the direction of **Keenan Tyler Oliphant**, the production remains in constant motionâ??dynamic without becoming crowded or unfocused. The chorus is not background texture, but an active storytelling force, shaping the emotional rhythm of each scene. There is a sense of closeness in how the story unfolds, an intimacy that feels less like spectacle and more like something being passed between peopleâ??deliberate, careful, and deeply felt.

default watermark

T. Oliver Reid builds on this through movement that is precise without calling attention to itself. Each gesture carries meaning, adding layers of emotional and narrative clarity.

Jose Contreras as Orpheus stands out for a striking falsettoâ??bright, controlled, and reachingâ??what defines the performance is the sense of purposeâ??and effortâ??beneath it.

Hawa Kamaraâ??s Eurydice grounds the production in material reality. She is not fragileâ??she is pragmatic. Her choices emerge from hunger, instability, and survival. By â??Flowers,â?• that survival has been stripped down to something almost unrecognizable. Kamara delivers several stunning vocal moments.

Namisa Mdlalose Bizanaâ??s Persephone moves between joy and fracture, offering moments of warmth that quietly resist the system surrounding her. She is a comedic actor in the best senseâ??her humor never disrupts the world of the play, but deepens it, revealing the characterâ??s humanity without undercutting its stakes.

Nickolaus ColÃ³nâ??s Hades is a standout, building authority through powerful bass vocals while maintaining clarity. The Fates (**Gia Keddy, Miriam Navarrete, and Jayna Wescoatt**) operate as a unified force of pressure and doubt, while **Rudy Fosterâ??s** Hermes holds the story together with clarity, rhythm, and devotion to its telling.

The Workers Chorus and onstage band reinforce the productionâ??s sense of collective embodiment. The music does not accompany the storyâ??it moves through it. It is alive, responsive, and shared.



Hadestown North American Touring Company, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Performance, Labor, and Embodiment

This framing becomes even more complex when considered through the lens of Black and BIPOC performance traditions. This is not reducible to casting. The musicalâ??s sonic and aesthetic frameworkâ??rooted in jazz, blues, and American folkâ??emerges from Black cultural production, where music has historically functioned as both survival practice and world-making.

To tell a Greek myth through this lineage is to shift its rhetorical ground. Eurydiceâ??s descent becomes materially legibleâ??shaped by hunger, cold, and precarity. Orpheusâ??s song becomes an attempt to imagine otherwise within a system that resists change.

When embodied through BIPOC performance, the underworldâ??s logic of labor and disposability resonates differently. It becomes less abstract, more historically legible. The production does not declare this meaningâ??it produces it through tension, through embodiment, through relation. Repetition, too, transforms. This is not simply fate. It is practice. It is memory. It is the act of returning.

At the same time, the production resists collapsing into a single narrative. Meaning remains layered, unresolved, and contingent.

Final thoughts

In this sense, *Hadestown* does not simply retell a mythâ??it rehearses it. Each performance becomes an act of return, shaped by the conditions of its telling: its bodies, its rhythms, its fractures. This iteration, still settling into its full rhythm, makes that process visible. It reminds us that the story holds most fully when everything alignsâ??when sound, movement, and relation carry it forward together.

default watermark



Rudy Foster (Hermes) and the Hadestown North American Touring Company, 2026. Photo by: Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.

Show Details

Hadestown
Presented by Zions Bank Broadway at the Eccles

ð??• Eccles Theater
ð?? March 24â??29, 2026

Performance Times:
Tuesdayâ??Thursday: 7:00 PM
Friday: 7:30 PM
Saturday: 1:00 PM & 7:30 PM
Sunday: 1:00 PM & 6:30 PM

default watermark

Running Time:
Approximately 2 hours, 30 minutes (including one intermission)

Tickets:
$64.10 â?? $200.20
ð??? 801-355-ARTS
ð??? Available through Arttix / Broadway at the Eccles

Tickets

Content & Accessibility Notes

Recommended for ages 8+

This production contains:

- Theatrical haze
- Strobe-like lighting effects
- Adult themes and language

Accessible Performances:

- **ASL Interpreted:** Thursday, March 26 at 7:00 PM
- **Audio Description:** Friday, March 27 at 7:30 PM
- **Open & Closed Captioning:** Saturday, March 28 at 1:00 PM

Closed captioning is available via personal device (StreamText), with open captioning displayed on a screen near the stage during designated performances.

Category

1. Reviews
2. BIPOC Voices

Tags

1. BIPOC Performance
2. Broadway tour
3. Greek Myth Adaptation
4. Hadestown
5. Labor and Capitalism
6. Musical Theatre
7. performance as archive
8. Salt Lake City Theatre
9. Storytelling and Memory
10. Theatre Review

default watermark

Date
2026/11/04
Date Created
2026/03/25
Author
keola06