Uncaged
Cabrillo Stage’s ‘La Cage aux Folles’ is perfectly timed for post-Prop. 8 world

BY LILY STOICHEFF

Cabrillo Stage’s production of La Cage aux Folles, directed and choreographed by Janie Scott, is a grand and glitzy night of musical comedy. La Cage tells the story of Albin and Georges, a middle-aged homosexual couple who run a transvestite nightclub in St. Tropez. Albin, under the name ZaZa, is the star. When Georges’ son from a long-ago fling, Jean-Michel (Curtis Reynolds), announces he will marry the daughter of the conservative leader of the Tradition, Family and Morality party, Jean-Michel insists that his “mother,” Albin, played tenderly by Tony Panighetti, should remain out of sight while the future in-laws are in town. Jean-Michel is convinced they will forbid the wedding should they discover he’s been raised by two fathers.

From the opening number, “We Are What We Are,” performed sensationnally by Les Cagelles Dangereux, this show has more sparkling glamour and high-kicks than you can shake a feather boa at. The recent Supreme Court decisions knocking down the Defense of Marriage Act and California’s Prop. 8 add a layer of timely cultural significance to the hilarious, sexy story.

Although the play is more than 30 years old, its gay themes feel more relevant than ever. Watching Albin’s heart break as his partner and son assert that he cannot be present to meet Jean-Michel’s fiancée and her parents is wrenching. This sharp betrayal by the two people whom he loves and trusts most is channeled into the show-stealing “I Am What I Am,” an anthem for anyone who has ever struggled to be genuine against opposition.

Jerry Herman has cleverly wrought his immortal songs to appeal to anyone who perseveres against intolerance at any time. Any couple that has endured decades of both love and hardship can relate to the touching “Song in the Sand.” Every woman who relishes glamping herself up for an evening out could sing “A Little More MASCARA,” and the song meant to defend a gay parent, “Look Over There,” applies in many different contexts. The highly skilled and energetic cast translates the themes passionately to create an evening of great entertainment.

Cabrillo Stage’s La Cage aux Folles plays through Aug. 18 at the Crocker Theater in Aptos.