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# SCHOOL OF ROCK

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Book by Julian Fellowes, Lyrics by Glenn Slater, Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Based on the Paramount Movie by Mike White

## Bass Hall, Fort Worth

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Director – Laurence Connor  
Choreographer – JoAnn M. Hunter  
Music Director – Martyn Axe  
Scenic Designer – Anna Louizos  
Costume Designer – Anna Louizos  
Lighting Designer – Natasha Katz  
Sound Design – Mick Potter  
Hair Design – Josh Marquette  
Production Stage Manager – Larry Smiglewski

### CAST

Dewey – Rob Colletti  
Rosalie – Lexie Dorsett Sharp  
Ned – Matt Bittner  
Patty – Emily Borromeo  
Shonelle – Arianna Pereika  
Katie – Leanne Parks  
James – Jacob Moran  
Marcy – Alyssa Emily Marvin  
Mason – Julian Brescia  
Freddy – Cameron Trueblood  
Tomika – Grier Burker  
Zack – Mystic Inscho  
Billy – Sammy Dell  
Lawrence – Theo Mitchell-Penner  
Summer – Sami Bray  
Sophie – Gabriella Uhl  
Doug / Mr. Spencer- Tim Shea  
Ms. Sheinkopf / Security Guard #1 – Kara Haller  
Snake / Mr. Monneyham – Sinclair Mitchell  
Stanley / Mr. Williams – Jameson Moss  
Gabe Brown / Mr. Hamilton – Patrick Clanton

Bob/ Mr. Sandford / Cop – Liam Fennecken

Mrs. Hathaway – Elysia Jordan

Theo – Hernando Umana

Security Guard #2 – Melanie Evans

Ensemble – Patrick Clanton, Kristian Espiritu, Melanie Evans, Liam Fennecken, Elysia Jordan, Sinclair Mitchell, Jameson Moss, Tim Shea, Hernando Umana

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Reviewed Performance: 8/28/2018

Reviewed by Carol M. Rice, Associate Critic for John Garcia's THE COLUMN

Confession time: I've never seen the 2003 Jack Black movie, School of Rock...and now that I've seen the musical of the same name, I can't decide whether I want to see the "original" or if I'm satisfied now. Because the Broadway at the Bass touring production was immensely satisfying! What an amazing, FUN show!

Led by the hilarious and extremely talented Rob Colletti as down-on-his-luck and broke musician Dewey Finn, School of Rock starts off on a high note and successfully manages to stay there, never losing momentum. As the show begins, Dewey is being kicked out of the band he apparently started, and his best friend and roommate Ned is being led by his overbearing fiancé to try to kick him out of his apartment due to his owing back rent. Ned is a substitute teacher, and when Dewey answers the phone in Ned's absence and finds out he could make some pretty decent money as a long-term sub at a posh prep school, he decides to take on his friend's identity and accepts the job for himself. It's just glorified babysitting, right? As one might expect, he starts off completely clueless about how to deal with kids, administrators, and other teachers, especially those in such a regimented environment. But as luck would have it, on one of the many days he's late, he hears his class playing classical music (quite well, I might add) and a light bulb goes off: he's going to turn these kids into a band!

And what a talented band they are! Leanne Parks easily transitions from cello to bad-ass bass guitar, Theo Mitchell-Penner's mad keyboard skills are ripe for rock and roll, and Cameron Trueblood's over-exuberance on the cymbals (which got him into trouble playing the classical stuff) translates into his being a jamming drummer. Most impressive of the musicians, though, is Mystic Inscho on the electric guitar. He truly owns the stage when he's featured playing, and, a master guitarist himself, Mr. Colletti is not afraid to let his co-stars shine. This goes for singer Grier Burke as well, who slowly grows from playing the new girl at school who barely speaks to the band's lead vocalist. She has a young but strong voice that easily carried an a capella "Amazing Grace" into the rafters. I almost wondered if Mr. Colletti and the other kids' amazed reactions were real, because she really did come out of nowhere to blow us all away.

The combination of all these kids' talents along with those of the other students in the class is nothing short of fabulous. The ensemble work of the kids is great, as no one seemed to steal focus when it wasn't called for, and they worked well as a team. A few standouts, though: as the completely organized former teacher's pet Summer, Sami Bray is a tiny powerhouse of

energy in a performance truly deserving multiple gold stars. As Billy, Sammy Dell has some riotous yet heart-felt moments as a kid who has no interest in sports and would rather read Vogue, listen to Barbra Streisand, and design costumes for the glam rock crowd. Tough role for one so young.

And that's what really amazed me - how YOUNG all these kids were! We're not talking high school or even junior high aged kids - these are kids who are probably all still in grade school but who have incredible musical talent and skills. Kudos to their parents for allowing them to follow their dreams and be in a touring show!

Speaking of parents, the ensemble of adults in School of Rock also deserves a huge shout-out. While most of the roles weren't large, everyone played multiple parts and they created uniquely individual characters for each of them. I particularly enjoyed Kara Haller as Ms. Sheinkopf.

I also have to mention the song sung by the students, "If Only You Would Listen," which was so beautifully performed, not only by the kids, but by the adults who were ignoring them, and then later, in the reprise led by Miss Burke. Sometimes we as adults need to take such things to heart and help make a difference in a child's life. I got misty-eyed both times.

As for the other adult leads besides Mr. Colletti, Matt Bittner portrayed Ned with a goofy nebbishness that made one wonder why his fiancé Patty (played by the stunning Emily Borromeo) stuck with him. His obvious disbelief at his good fortune was well played, and her professional drive was almost scary, so it was nice to see her melt a little at the end when he finally stood up to her. You kind of think there might be hope for him not to be hen-pecked after all.

Then there's the multi-layered performance of Lexie Dorsett Sharp as Rosalie, the uptight principal of Horace Green Academy who harbors a secret love of Stevie Nicks songs. WOW. Her operatic chops are on display in "Queen of the Night," followed later on by the heart-felt rock ballad "Where Did the Rock Go?" which almost brought me to tears again. What a gorgeous, multi-faceted voice this woman has! She also moves like a dancer (something this role sadly doesn't give her a chance to show off), and plays all the many levels of the role flawlessly. Ms. Sharp is the perfect complement to Mr. Colletti, and the two have excellent chemistry and emotion together.

I honestly haven't said much about Mr. Colletti, but his performance was simply outstanding! The character of Dewey's growth throughout the piece was just right, and he was never cloying with the kids. He felt completely honest from the moment he hit the stage to the curtain call when he introduced everyone else in the show. This is one of those roles that could easily be overplayed, and Mr. Colletti never tried doing too much, yet he was always 100% engaged - not easy in a role that requires that much constant energy! He has also managed to master both the metal rock voice and the Broadway singing voice, along with his seemingly effortless guitar playing. Great job!

The orchestra/band, led by Music Director Martyn Axe, was perfect, but I have to mention the kids again, too. There was announcement before the show started stating that they play their own instruments onstage and I'm glad they said something or I wouldn't have believed it!

The constantly changing set full of walls and drops that moved seamlessly in and out as the scenes changed was brilliantly designed by Anna Louizos, who also designed the costumes, which were spot on as well. Prep school uniforms turned rock band? Check! Natasha Katz's lighting design was able to morph easily between rock concerts and school classrooms, and while JoAnn M. Hunter's choreography occasionally felt a bit too jumpy, it worked well for the show.

Another confession: I've never been a big Andrew Lloyd Webber fan. Most of his stuff seems too repetitive to me, but other than one too many repeats of "Stick It to the Man," School of Rock thankfully stays away from this obstacle. While others may say this show is fluff compared with, say, Phantom of the Opera, I find it a heck of a lot more enjoyable, filled with amazing, energetic performances by everyone involved, under the astute direction of Laurence Connor. Working with kids isn't easy, and he makes everything and everyone fit together like a well-oiled machine.

I highly recommend seeing School of Rock at the Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth, but you'll have to hurry, as it's only running through September 2.

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## SCHOOL OF ROCK

Bass Performance Hall

330 E 4th St., Ste. 300, Fort Worth, TX 76102

Runs through September 2.

Actual days: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at 7:30 pm, Saturday at 1:30 pm and 7:30 pm, and Sunday at 1:30 pm and 6:30 pm

Tickets are \$44.00 to \$116.00

For information and to purchase tickets, go to <http://www.basshall.com/> or call the box office at (817) 212-4300.