

Features

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On alert

How does your brain respond to danger? Scientists are beginning to understand. **E3**

Annie's Mailbox	E7
Comics	E6
TV listings	E5
Show Clock	E7

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MONDAY

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Stellar performances make show a Beauty

By Marty Rosen
Special to The Courier-Journal

THEATER REVIEW

"Disney's Beauty and the Beast"

If the course of true love ran smoothly, there would be no poets, no songwriters and definitely no such thing as musical theater. But it's not the nature of love to run smoothly, so there's plenty of work for earnest poets and ardent songwriters. And there is plenty of musical theater.

Indeed, there's enough of a market for it that once upon a time the folks at Disney decided they should adapt an already-blockbuster movie into a theatrical production — and along came "Beauty and the Beast," which opened on Broadway in 1994, became the sixth-longest running show in Broadway history, and earned nine Tony nominations.

Music Theatre Louisville's production, directed by Mirla Christe, with striking sets by Lee Buckholtz and a bright whirl of costumes by Guy Tedesco, opened Friday at Iroquois Amphitheater.

Belle (Marissa Ghavami) is a bookish, beautiful oddball

who loves to read, dreams of adventure and doesn't quite fit the feminine profile in her little town. No way is she interested in, say, massaging the feet of swaggering suitor Gaston (Gordon L. Crawford).

And there's the Beast (Ross Lekites). Once a handsome prince, the Beast is under a spell that can only be broken if he falls in unselfish love with

someone — and is loved in the same way.

When Belle's zany inventor father Maurice (Matt Orme) is imprisoned in the Beast's castle, Belle exchanges herself for him and sparks fly between Belle and Beast.

Besides a forgone conclusion we get vivid production numbers, a few nice flying



By David R. Lutman, Special to The Courier-Journal

Marissa Ghavami, right, plays Belle, the beauty in "Beauty & The Beast," at Iroquois Amphitheater.

scenes and a delightful cadre of sharp-witted anthropomorphized household items like Lumiere the candelabra (a very amusing Gregory Maupin), Mrs. Potts the teakettle (Tracy Zavakil), and Cogsworth the clock (Jay Nelson).

Music Director Craig Swatt moves briskly through the score, the choruses are marvelous and lovely Ghavami's luscious voice was made to sing Belle. Lekites gives the Beast a nice dollop of touchy vulnerability. Zavakil's haunting performance sets the tone in the title tune, and among scads of fine stock characters, Orme, Crawford and Kevin Thacker as Gaston's obsequious minion give standout performances.