



WHAT'S THE **BEST** THAT CAN HAPPEN?

Review

Book, Music & Lyrics by Emma Vieceli

Musical Direction & Orchestration by Liz Townsend

Choreographer David Mallabone

Directed by Cat Nicol

BETWEEN THE BARS premiered a new and original musical *Unfolding* at the ADC Theatre on 10 September, and what a privilege it was to be among the first to see this exceptional show. With book, music and lyrics by Emma Vieceli *Unfolding* is the story of Rose who is turning 40. Stuck in a dead-end job and living in the shadow of her father's suicide, she escapes into her letters with Mark, a man on the other side of the world who she's never met. For nearly thirty years Rose has been braver on paper than in person, but when Mark's letters suddenly stop, everything changes.

Great lighting (Alan Morgan) and sound (Nick Hall) enhanced Matthew Brown's minimal but clever set design which gave Director Cat Nicol full scope to use the various levels to great advantage and for the performers to expertly execute David Mallabone's excellent choreography. The water cooler, preflight and landing scenes were masterly.

The Band under Musical Director Liz Townsend's masterful baton were splendid and vocally the cast were faultless. It takes something special for a song to stun an audience into silence but that is what David Barrett's superb rendition, as Mark, of *It Starts Small* did. It is no surprise that this is the song which won the prestigious Style & Drew best new song prize in December 2024.

The whole cast were outstanding as were the vocals. Danielle Padley (Young Rose), Ed Chancellor (Young Mark), Emily Starr (Mum), Matt Wilkinson (Dad) were also "The Ensemblers" skilfully taking on multiple roles. Super performances from Vikki Jones as Florence, Ellie Baldwin as Natasha and Helen Petrovna as Carly. This trio made very believable friends for Rose and almost brought the house down with *Everyone's Got Problems*. Lovely performance too from Chloe Hall as Tessa whose solo *So Many Doors* was beautifully done. Top accolades to David Barrett as Mark - what a voice - and of course the indomitable Emma Vieceli who gave the performance of the night as Rose.

With beautiful story telling the clever lyrics, which touched on some tough themes with empathy, balanced by humorous moments *Unfolding's* premiere was a great hit.

Congratulations to Emma Vieceli, Director Cat Nicol and all involved with this remarkable production. I am sure we will see many more productions of this lovely musical and having the programme in an envelope for us to unfold was a stroke of genius.

Dear Rose, it was an undeniable pleasure to meet you.

Julie Petrucci

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