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Fingers & Toes sizzles for audience

Remember the magic of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers

Joaquim P. Menezes, Special to the Beaver

Mar 17, 2004

If you enjoy music, dance and a fast-paced script *Fingers & Toes* is just what the doctor ordered.

Scripted and scored by former concert pianist Logan Medland, this entertaining production sizzles with exhilarating music, delightful witticisms, and high-energy tap dance routines that evoke the magic of the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers era.

While most of the songs and duets (*If I Only Had a Brain/Over the Rainbow* and *I Get Along Without You Very Well/When I Fall in Love?*) are reminiscent of the 30s and 40s, they are enchantingly interwoven with lyrics and motifs directly related to the story.

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The plot itself, though replete with unexpected twists and turns, is perhaps incidental to the music and electrifying dance numbers. But it does provide the links without getting in the way.

It centres around the contrasting personalities of *Fingers*, the talented but melancholic piano virtuoso Tristan MacLean and his buddy *Toes*, the effervescent perennial chorus boy and tap



Peter C. McCusker, Beaver photographer

Logan Medland as Tristan "Fingers" McLean and Timothy Gledhill as Adrian "Toes" McGrath in the show dubbed what else but *Fingers & Toes*.



Peter C. McCusker, Beaver photographer

Fingers & Toes at The Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts with Logan Medland as Tristan "Fingers" McLean and Timothy Gledhill as Adrian "Toes" McGrath in search of a musical comedy.

genius Adrian McGrath. The duo seeks to breathe life into their catatonic careers by wowing a bigwig producer with their new show on the theme of "love." The only problem is the show hasn't been written yet.

"How hard can it be?" says Toes. But for a show about love to work, the boys need a girl. When Molly Molloy arrives, the sparks begin to fly...creatively, and then romantically. Before she can save the show, she's got to save herself from the perils of her own love life which is spiraling out of control.

As the clock winds down to the deadline, the desperation grows, and everything including the kitchen sink is caught up in the frenzy to create, in this witty "we're putting on a show" genre.

Whatever you think of the story, you cannot but be enthralled by the dance routines. Too often these days, musicals are static affairs. Not this one. The simple set, minimal props and clever choreography form the backdrop for a tap dancing extravaganza.

Carrying off a two hour production with just three characters is quite a job - but the cast of Logan Medland (*Fingers*), Timothy Gledhill (*Toes*) and Allison Plamondon (*Molly*) are more than equal to the task.

The music is testimony to Medland's creative genius and his technical expertise. The dominant cadence and rhythms are 30s jazz and blues, but they seamlessly blend into other genres as the story evolves.

Medland's background as a concert pianist is evident in many of the masterly improvisations. "There are a lot of jazz artists out there who can play a lot of notes," Medland had said when promoting his latest CD. "I'm more interested in creating a mood. I want to make a song mean something personal."

In *Fingers & Toes* he accomplishes all this...with finesse.

Timothy Gledhill as "Toes" is a delightful counterfoil to the melancholic "Fingers" and endears himself to the audience with his good-natured though ham-fisted attempts to help his buddy - who has just lost his girl to another man - to snap out of depression.

Gledhill joined this production after a successful run in the Manitoba Theatre Centre's production of *My Fair Lady*, where he was seen as one of the Cockneys in the quartet.

Allison Plamondon excels as the petite but perky Molly Molloy with a rich voice, lithe figure and zesty tap dancing talent that equals Gledhill's. Together the pair effortlessly stamp out some ingenious routines.

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The show is entertaining from start to finish. It's a wonderful cornucopia of music, atmosphere, comedy and above all, tap-dancing.

My only disappointment - the end came too soon.