

BWW Review: Sentimentality and Show-Stopping Performances Make Temple Theatre's GHOST Worth the Trip

by Lauren Van Hemert Oct. 24, 2018



In the summer of 1990, the genre-bending, sleeper movie 'Ghost' opened. It became the highest grossing film that year.



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Nearly two decades later, the musical stage version first

opened in London and then on Broadway. Featuring a large cast and blinding special effects, the Broadway version seemed to lose the intimacy that made the movie a box office success.

After the show closed and went on tour, the creative team, along with The Fulton Theatre, reworked the show into a smaller-scale, chamber version that would be closer to the movie. The reimaged version premiered at the Fulton Theatre in 2016 to critical acclaim and opened at the Temple Theatre in Sanford last week.

The story is the same as the movie. Sam and Molly are madly in love and seem to lead a charmed life until Sam is murdered.

Sam's spirit turns to psychic Oda Mae Brown to help him solve his murder and rescue an unsuspecting Molly from Carl, Sam's best friend turned traitor.

The success of this show depends on the chemistry between the four main characters. While Dave Toole (Sam) and Hailey Best (Molly) lack the spark of **Patrick Swayze** and **Demi Moore**, the bromance between Toole and **Andrew Wade** (Carl) at the beginning of the show is palpable. Toole's vocals are faultless throughout. Wade too is a skilled pro but is often drowned out by the ensemble. Best, much like her character, comes into her own in the second act and particularly shines during the melodious "Nothing Stops Another Day."

But the night belongs to La'Tonya Wiley (Oda Mae Brown). It's hard to imagine anybody other than Academy Award-winner **Whoopi Goldberg** playing this role, but Wiley nails it. She effectively takes ownership of Oda Mae by approaching the script (including those memorable lines) with a fresh pair of eyes and resists the temptation to mock Goldberg's performance with a cheap imitation. Her comedic timing is on point and her spirited, show-stopping performance is expressive and wholly entertaining.

Overall, director **Bill Saunders** effectively replaces the splashy effects and magic used on Broadway with some clever blocking, although some effects, like the "shadows of death" who appear to drag Willie and Carl away, don't work well at all. Still, for me, there is something nostalgic and sentimental about GHOST and that, along with some standout performances and show-stopping moments, makes me a believer.

GHOST runs through November 4th at the Temple Theatre. For more information visit: <http://templeshows.com/>.

