

## ENTERTAINMENT

## 'Technicolor Dreamcoat' wears well for the holidays

By Carl Apone

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In former years the Broadway scene was dominated by the teams of Lerner and Loewe, Rodgers and Hammerstein. Nowadays composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and lyricist Tim Rice wear the crown.

They have turned out such musicals as "Jesus Christ Superstar," "Evita," "Cats" and now "Joseph

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and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

Last night "Joseph" came to Heinz Hall, and while there were no songs to rival "Jesus Christ Superstar," "I Don't Know How to Love Him," "Don't Cry for Me Argentina" or "Memory," "Dreamcoat" is a tiny gem which continues to win friends for Webber and Rice.

"Joseph" is one of those rare

contemporary musicals which is full of joy and laughter and suitable for the entire family. And it is all packed into 90 minutes so that the youngsters don't have time to get fidgety.

By bringing the show here at this time, the Pittsburgh Symphony and Civic Light Opera have helped to add brightness to this holiday season. A crowd of 2,350 attended, about 30 percent of them children. The show runs through Friday and is a worthwhile gift for family or friend who needs a bit of fun in life.

When "Jesus Christ Superstar" was in its zenith, many clergymen envied the production, for they knew that if they could present the story of Christ as well as Webber and Rice their churches would be filled with young people.

This biblical story of the 12 sons of Jacob, related in zany fashion by Webber and Rice, might not fill churches, but it certainly provides a brief theatrical holiday for all those

who cast their lot with this production.

The creators relate their biblical tale mostly through 23 songs, in rock, calypso and mood music. While the score was not distinguished, it was delightfully humorous and very attractive. Webber's bouncy, imaginative, sparkling score gives rock a good name. And Rice's lyrics usually set off ripples of chuckling. Their best efforts: "One More Angel in Heaven," "Poor, Poor Pharaoh," "These Caanan Days," and "Benjamin Calypso."

David Cassidy, who did the role of Joseph on Broadway, wears the Dreamcoat well. He has the proper sneer on his face when he tells his 11 brothers of his dream "I am born to higher things than you." And the favorite son milks his father's love obnoxiously. There was sympathy for the brothers who want to wrap their canes around his neck, although sending him into slavery was

excessive.

Cassidy has a voice and style which is most comfortable with this rock music, and he delivers the songs in winning, gyrating fashion reminiscent of the days when he was a teen-age idol. At 33, Cassidy hasn't forgotten what it takes to win the hearts of fair young damsels.

Pittsburgh's own Robin Boudreau is a vibrant narrator who brings sparkle to the show whenever she appears. In the song "Pharaoh's Story," she sings "Joseph could be a star." The description fits her. There was a Judy Garland, star-like quality to her performance. However, perhaps because of the hometown crowd, she was sometimes over-exuberant and screamed a bit much in her singing.

The most hilarious moment in the show was when Hal Davis ripped off his cloak as the Pharaoh and became a rocking Elvis in "Poor, Poor Pharaoh." It's all there. White shirt and pants, ducktail haircut, and the

strutting about the stage. Alan Nicholson was also excellent in the calypso number.

The wacky sense of humor, never long off stage, brought some of the most delicious moments to this musical, which delights in not taking itself seriously.

Karl Eigsti's set in the opening scene was rather chintzy and flimsy, but after that the backdrops were imaginative and most serviceable, especially opulent in the Pharaoh's palace. The lighting and costumes were attractive.

Musical director Valerie Gebert kept the musical line flowing and bubbling. Above all, the production gets just the right touch from Tony Tanner's direction and choreography. The dances are not show-stoppers, and the songs aren't either. By not squeezing more from the material than was there, he reaped an abundant harvest.

(Carl Apone is Press music editor.)