

You Will Be Found... Loving This Show by Katie Leland

Every so often a new musical opens that to which the people flock. A show that no one knows what it truly is about until Act II ends, and you walk out of the theater emotionally moved. The last show that has had this type of emotional reaction was with the 2015 opening of *Fun Home*. Well, that was until the December 4th opening of the musical *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Dear Evan Hansen, the newest musical to open on Broadway, is worth all of the hype. The show centers on the namesake of the show, Evan Hansen, who is a high school senior and his involvement with the grieving Murphy family who has just lost their son, Connor. We are told the story through the eyes of Evan, an anxiety-ridden teen who is incapable of conversing with others. He takes us through the ups, downs, and all in between. Evan speaks to the audience with asides through his letters, which is what got him in the mess of Connor's death in the first place.

The music throughout *Dear Evan Hansen* is phenomenal and restores musical theatre to its former glory through every song, word, and note serving an obvious part in moving the plot along. This show is unlike many modern musicals that include at least one or two "fluff" songs that do nothing for the show as a whole except engage the audience like "I'm too Hot for You" from *School of Rock*. Not only are the songs perfectly placed in wonderful intervals, the orchestration fits the show's new-age, technology-ridden feel with sounds that imitate those from pop radio stations. The message, however, is what really draws people in. The most popular song from the show, "You Will Be Found", reassures the audience that you are never alone. You will be found. This message is accompanied with countless other inspirational tid-bits throughout the other songs.

Ben Platt, who plays Evan Hansen, is astonishing in his performance. Platt incorporates impulses and motivations of those with severe anxiety into his portrayal of Evan. The ticks are not nearly as severe as those we see in Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, but if you imagine them toned down from a ten to a six, you have Evan Hansen. Next, the chemistry between Platt and Laura Dreyfuss, who plays Zoe Murphy, is undeniable. The playful nature between Connor's supposed best friend and Connor's younger sister is something that looks like it could come straight out of a cheesy teen romance novel.

Unfortunately, some individual performances are not as strong as others. Michael Park, who plays Connor's father Larry Murphy, does not have an outstanding performance. In parts of the performance he seems not to be as focused as the other performers, which causes him to stand out in a poor way. His character seems that of the typical dad with nothing special added to make him someone we have never seen before, which is just another reason Park sticks out from the rest of the cast.

The overall performance as a whole is fantastic, but there is a major hole in plot development left for the viewer's imagination: how is it that Connor died? Within the first twenty minutes of the show, we see Connor's parents grieving over what they claim is his supposed suicide note, but no further explanation is given. The only things we know are the lies that Evan and his friend, Jared, create. This causes many more questions to arise such as "what was even written in Evan's letter?" and "Is Evan even a trustworthy narrator?"

Overall, *Dear Evan Hansen* is going to be the next show to be as big as *Hamilton* due to its already cult-like following. The show leaves the audience with the knowledge that it is okay to be the outcast and that everyone else has been there, too. Through the plot, the music, and the overall performance, *Dear Evan Hansen* is a show unlike any other on Broadway and should definitely be number one on your “Must See” list for this season.