

SCENE

FROM THE HOUSE

DEC.
2022



A Creatyve Stage Review
by
Naelis A. Ervin

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SOMEWAY, SOMEHOW

Spirituality takes Center Stage in this timeless recount of a Christmas story. *Someway, Somehow* shifts the focus of this seasonal classic to a story that shines a light on the faith and romantic connection between Mary and Joseph. With its clever use of comedy and musicality, audiences are instantly captivated by the creative showcase of love for man, for self, and for God.

Someway, Somehow was written and directed by Joshua Jenkins and Anthony Brown, casting over 70 talented performers including an all-star cast of notable performing artists such as Bebe Winans, Tamela and David Mann, Kierra Sheard-Kelly, and Jonathan McReynolds. In its 13th run, we see the elevated works of Jenkins and Brown fully embodied in the Christmas spirit.



I'm not afraid to have a character say, 'I am a Christian,' or, 'I believe in God,' because I think they represent real people on this Earth

-Tyler Perry

Run Time:

2.5 hours* including 15- minute intermission

Estimated

Theatre/Company/Venue

First Baptist Church of Glenarden
600 Watkins Park Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774



Producer, Writer & Director
Joshua Jenkins



Producer, Writer & Director
Anthony Brown

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SETTING THE TONE

It started as a gift from one of my childhood friends and his wonderful wife. "This is a show that I NEED you to see. I hope it fuels your creativity and inspires you like it did for me." I didn't know what to expect, but I know that if my friend willingly saw this production 3 times and is a tough critic himself, there must be something to this.

The doors of the First Baptist Church of Glenarden opened up as if I was being greeted at the Pearly Gates themselves. Like the media portrays, there were bright lights, warm smiles and an instant sense of calm that welcomed hundreds of guests into the venue. I arrived 25 minutes before showtime, not knowing how large of a space I would have to navigate, but not once did I feel rushed on the way to finding my seat or section. The holiday decor was larger than life and vibrant while the ushers were patiently awaiting each guest to escort them to their designated area.

Opening Set of Someway, Somehow
Photo Cred. -Naelis A. Ervin

Tier 2, Section 12, Row W, Seat 18. Although closer than others, I was nervous about whether I'd be able to make out characters on stage. Again, this venue is vast and the further back you were, the more challenging it was to get the fine details of the set, costumes, or perhaps even characters

It hit me instantly that this would be a "glasses-on" performance to maximize my experience. At exactly noon, members of the audience, which was about 98% full and still coming down in large crowds, were greeted by creators, Anthony Brown and Joshua Jenkins. There was a heartfelt prayer that was spoken over us, so beautifully, that I felt was crafted just for me to hear. Talk about instant tears.

After the opening remarks, there were a few more minutes of wait time to allow the crowd to dwindle. During that time, I scanned the room witnessing several guests exchanging hugs and overhearing many others discuss how many times they'd seen the production that awaited us. I was a newbie and couldn't take part in the '*battle of the viewing record*', but when the house lights went off, it was not long before I understood why so many kept coming back.

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TAKE A BOW

From the opening number to the curtain call, the music and choreography kept my spirit elevated the entire time. If I could describe the sound of this musical, I would give you a tablespoon of my favorite 90s theme songs, 2 cups of Disney Princess films, a dash of The Prince of Egypt soundtrack, and a gallon of Gospel goodness.

The opening number was larger than life and every dancer that graced that stage did NOT hold back from giving us a top-notch performance. The choreographer's seamless blend of liturgical, dancehall, Hip Hop, African, and Modern had me ready to bust out a few 8 counts with the ensemble. They did not miss a beat or emotional response.

McReynolds's voice is as pure as his performance in this production. I will admit that I am late to the fan club train but consider my ticket purchased, stamped, and my stop nowhere in sight. Mary and Joseph, played by Anaysha Figueroa-Cooper and Darrel Walls are a dynamic blend of velvet voices that give us a new reason to love again.

David Mann is the David Alan Grier of the gospel stage. I've watched him in films but watching his physical comedy, quips, and vocal command while telling great stories was enjoyable. Bebe's voice is the kind to give you goosebumps in your kneecaps while trying to compute how Tamela Mann has you floating from cloud to cloud singing notes you didn't know existed.

Creators Anthony Brown, Joshua Jenkins and the All-Star Cast of *Someway, Somehow*.

Photo Cred. -Naelis A. Ervin

Regarding costumes, I enjoyed the simplicity of the muted mauve and sage colors used in Act I which was a perfect contrast to the regal designs chosen in Act II, highlighting the rubies, sapphires, and gold clothing worn by the townspeople. Lighting was primarily magentas, violets, and blues, but it gave great texture to the set that was simple yet sophisticated in its own right.

Things I loved-

Bebe Winans as King Herod and his army of soldiers was very much a nod to Evillene's sweatshop with the flying monkeys in *The Wiz*. No one can tell me otherwise. EVERY piece of choreography was riveting. I thoroughly enjoy purposeful movement and *Someway, Somehow* gave it all.

Things I Questioned-

The need for the angel that "fell" from the rafters. It happened twice and I'm not sure it was even needed the first time. It reminded me of Tyler Perry's use of them in the wedding scene of *Madea's Family Reunion*, which I also thought was odd.

FINAL THOUGHTS-

While I loved FBCG for opening their doors to the community, I lost some momentum during the show trying to make out things happening on the stage. Although distance can sometimes create disinterest during live shows, this production is more than worthy of being on a national platform. My two guests and I had moments of tears, renewal, inspiration, and laughter that was needed during this holiday season. I look forward to an even more extensive outreach as the production of *Someway, Somehow* moves into its 14th year.

RATING **9**