

Theater, Art & Music



Christmas Wonderland - The Holiday Show

A Review by Kevin Reeves
Staff Writer

I usually roll my eyes at the shameless consumerism and over-the-top marketing of Christmas iconography, but my holiday disdain was welcomingly defeated this year by a combination of magic bullets: a trip-hop infused Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy performed with glowing lights on a shadow-cloaked stage; various acts of high-kicking leggy Miss Santa Rockettes; a hysterical peek into a flirtatious Christmas date night tug-o-war; cheeky elfish acrobats popping & chair-dancing with synchronized excitement; World War II era swing-dancing soldiers flipping their gals through the air; breathtaking modern dance musculature writhing and arching with beauty and grace in a frosty winter fog; music box ballerinas coming to life with athletic accuracy; and jaw-dropping vocalists conjuring light-hearted humor one moment followed by serious wonder the next.

It's all packed into yet another satisfying show of extraordinary talent at the Reno Eldorado showroom, this time in the form of "Christmas Wonderland", running through December 27th, before the tantalizing "Mystic India" gyrates onto stage to take its place December 30th through January 4th (followed by the magically deceptive illusions and aerialist acts of "Madame Houdini" running January 14th through April 19th).

One of the most impressive moments (and trust me -there are MANY) in the "Christmas Wonderland" show is when the syrupy voice of Aaron Paulson slinks its way to hitting all the right notes of holiday favorite "Hallelujah" and, astonishingly, finds actual competition for center stage in a male and female dancer contorting through the showroom's fog, to gracefully steal attention as they move like statues come to life, giving the song physical form right before everyone's eyes.

Never disappointing, the pleasantly eyebrow-raising vocals of Julia Mansfield-Cholico are present also, showcased by her rendition of "Where Are You Christmas" (originally by Mariah Carey, James Horner & Will Jennings): a melancholic ballad that I generally feel over romanticizes Christmas sentiments, but (as a testament to Mansfield-Cholico's note-worthy voice & skilled use thereof) instead lulls audiences into a warm and peaceful state as she sings the words with graceful serenity.

On the other end of the emotional spectrum, a brassy red-headed, kick-in-the-pants Kiley McDonald pulls, prods, and pushes the audience along on her raucous journey through sensual charm and slapstick delight, playing the feminine foil to Aaron Paulson's male half of the classic theatrical duet "Baby, It's Cold Outside".

Coyly teasing one another in and out of romantic comfort zones, the two sing each other into prolonging their evening together on a snowy winter night. I've always been a fan of male/female duets, but seeing this one acted out while they sing, with the striking facial expressions & seamless action in parallel with the lyrics...well, it is DEFINITELY a fun spectacle, for which they both deserve high marks.

The fun really jumps off the chart when the cast of dancers and singers animate a 40s wartime military dance, electrifying the showroom in one of the coolest and most professionally choreographed song-and-dance numbers I've ever seen in person.

Expertly mimicking the swing dance era, bodies were twirling, shaking, bouncing, flipping, spinning and fast-stepping so quickly that I found myself wanting to come back one or two more times, just so I could watch a different pair of dancers each time and avoid missing out on any of the moves.

It was seriously exciting, and I could tell other attendees agreed with me, because we gasped in unison at some of the incredible steps and swings. Whether it's new edgy twists on Christmas classics, or picture-and-pitch-perfect traditional holiday homages, the talent is undeniably present, leaving audiences happily agape and itching for more.

I've seen enough grade-A quality from the Eldorado showroom productions to hang my hat on future fare as well, but I strongly recommend you dust off the sled and warm up the reindeers to make it in before "Christmas Wonderland" leaves for good, December 27th.

Reserve tickets in the Eldorado Showroom today! Prices start at just \$25.95, with dinner and show packages starting at just \$35.95 Children ages 5 through 12, and Seniors over 60 receive a discounted price for regular seating.

Tickets can be purchased at Eldorado's Entertainment site: <http://www.eldoradoreno.com/entertainment-and-events/> It's a jewel box of a theater; the Eldorado Showroom has unobstructed viewing from any seat, and yet provides an intimate atmosphere.

For times/tickets, call 800-648-5966 Performances Tuesday through Sunday, 7pm plus 3pm matinees Saturday and Sunday. Enjoy a Broadway-style production at the opulent Eldorado soon! 345 N Virginia St, Reno, NV 800-916-4339. *Courtesy Photo credit to Spirit Productions.*

Itty-Bitty Mini Show 2014 Now through Dec 22nd from 12pm - 5pm. Lodi Community Art Center, 209-333-3855. Small works by local artists. Perfect for holiday gifts!

The Carson Valley Inn

Featuring free live entertainment in the Cabaret Lounge on Sunday through Wednesday from 6 to 10pm; Thursday from 8pm to midnight; and Friday and Saturday, 8pm to 1am, the property includes a casino, sports and race book, 149-room hotel, 74-room motor lodge, 59-site RV Park and a convenience store with Shell gas and diesel fuel. There are also banquet and meeting rooms and services plus three dining facilities

George Pickard, Dec 16 & 17: George is an accomplished performer, believable impressionist, captivating entertainer and successful song writer.

Atomika, Dec 18 - 20: Atomika entertains with their huge variety of chart-topping hits from Top 40, Rock, R&B, Country, Hip-hop, Pop, Alternative, and Dance.

Steve Lord, Dec 23 & 24: Playing guitar and offering dynamic vocals, Steve is a main stage performer on the West Coast. Known as the man of a thousand songs, Steve presents an evening of oldies, country, pop, blues, jazz, soul and rock 'n' roll.

Steppen Stonz, Dec 25 - 27: Steppen Stonz performs Broadway tunes, oldies, Motown and pop - an array of musical styles appealing to most musical tastes. The core of the group is the two lead vocalists, Michael Hill and Arthur Hayden, who started in college and have been performing together uninterrupted for over 30 years.

Jonathan "JB" Barton, Dec 28 - 30: In his four decades as an entertainer, Jonathan has shared the stage with a few legends including Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley.

The Blues Monsters, Dec 31: The Blues Monsters are a red-hot rockin' blues band performing a powerfully unique combination of R&B, funk, jazz, and Chicago-style blues - this one is a "don't miss."

Melissa Dru, Jan 1 - 3: Singer and songwriter Melissa Dru has performed at Carnegie Hall in New York and at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Melissa and her band cover a wide mix including classic rock, R&B and a bit of country; everything from Pink Floyd to Patsy Cline.

The Carson Valley Inn (www.carsonvalleyinn.com) is located on US Hwy 395 in Minden, NV near the start of State Hwy 88, twenty minutes from Lake Tahoe's south shore and 45 minutes south of Reno.

There are three dining facilities; CV Steak, the Inn's Nevada style steakhouse featuring steaks, seafood, pasta dishes and more; Katie's for 24-hour dining choices, and Job's Perk for coffee drinks, pastries and sundries.

Raffle prizes, Free gift wrap and Free Champagne!

NEW YORK FITNESS



Fashion & Fitness Holiday Boutique and Health Fair

Saturday, December 13th, Noon to 4pm

Free body fat testing

Personal training demonstrations
with Jarrod Landreth, CPFT

Denise Bertolozzi
Fashion & Fitness
209-256-9336



615 New York Ranch Rd., Jackson, CA
209.223.3236 www.nyfitness.com