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## **FLAMBE DREAMS at NYMF**

by Oscar E Moore

The management of the 45<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre should be ashamed for not having repaired their air conditioner where FLAMBE DREAMS is being performed under sweltering conditions. The heat in the theatre (hot air flowing through the ducts) was unfair to the actors and to the audience attending this new musical as part of the New York Musical Theatre Festival.

Despite the extremely uncomfortable conditions this improbable but highly diverting musical fable is quite entertaining, headed by an extraordinary cast of five who tell the tale of Joe Christiansen (a strong and sincere Jarrod Spector) who dreams of following in his father's footsteps, that is, to become a Maitre d specializing in desserts flambéed - desserts that caused his father to die tragically in a restaurant fire caused by some burning bananas.

Joe's overprotective, psychiatrist, pill prescribing mother Elaine (an excellent Catherine Cox bringing to mind the great actress and comedienne Eileen Heckart) tries to prevent his leaving Idaho for NYC but off Joe goes in search of a job as Maitre d. Mama, only trying to help, keeps tabs on his pill intake via phone.

While filling his mom's prescription for Prozac at Duane Reade, the "tidy and consistent" Joe meets Gloria (Jillian Louis whose talent ignites on stage a thousand times brighter than the delightful prop desserts) and we immediately know that they are meant for each other.

Joe's Candide like journey takes him to River's Holistic Tearoom, Speedy Happy Noodle Shop and Internet Café and eventually Le Cirque. Along the way he meets Desiree, a hot to trot and very personable prostitute (best friend of Gloria) and Delicious Dish a very modern sexy gal interested only in a guy who is connected and successful. Both gals are portrayed by J. Elaine Marcos - who is a knockout in the looks and talent departments.

Kevin B. McGlynn plays an assortment of characters deliciously culminating with his weirdly funny song "Some Girls" as River - a past his prime Hippie.

The a bit too long book and very clever lyrics by Matthew Hardy are backed up by some catchy melodies by Randy Klein. The score is light and witty and certainly has you rooting for Joe and Gloria all the way.

Catherine Cox wows us with "Elaine's Confession" / "Letting Go" and Joe's ballad "My Dream" tugs at the heartstrings while the ultimate tribute to that maligned Garden State - New Jersey "Everything You Longed For" by the radiant Jillian Louis and Company sends us home on a very high and happy note indeed.

Terrific projections by Michael Clark seamlessly take us along on Joe's journey which is tightly directed by West Hylar. **The brilliant prop desserts are designed by Melpomene Katakalos.** With some cuts - there are a couple of repetitive speed bumps along the way and perhaps getting the show down to 90 minutes without an intermission FLAMBE DREAMS could