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2012 NYMF Roundup #1

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Matthew Hardy and Randy Klein have written a very charming, funny, and surprisingly touching new musical, *Flambe Dreams*, now at the 45th Street Theatre, that can best be defined for jaded theatergoers by what it does not do: it doesn't reference or parody other musicals (well, only once), it doesn't prize style over content, and it doesn't try to be the next Sondheim musical. It is, in a word, refreshing.

The show is ostensibly about a young man (played by Jarrod Spector) who wants to become a great maître d' like his father, who was killed in a freak Bananas Foster accident, but what it's really about are the crazy ways in which love endures. Indeed, just when you think you know where the story is going, it delights you with its creative zigging and zagging.

Klein's music has verve; it's mostly written in a musical comedy idiom, but there is some pop in there, too. What particularly distinguishes the score, though, are Hardy's lyrics, which both move the story forward and offer quite a few laugh-out-loud moments. There are a number of wonderfully funny songs in this score.

Director West Hyler propels the story with a creative use of space, maximizing the use of the theater's center aisle, and eliciting uniformly excellent performances from his talented five-person cast. Spector effectively plays the sweetly innocent, if psychologically crippled, young hero. Catherine Cox brings both great comic chops and an endearing tenderness to her portrayal of the hero's overprotective mother; Jillian Louis, as the show's heroine, is exceptional as both an actress and singer; J. Elaine Marcos has a kicky personality and scores on two of the show's best numbers; and Kevin B. McGlynn shines in a variety of roles, exhibiting exquisite comic versatility.

In short, audiences that are lucky enough to see this show will receive their just desserts.