

## Black Pearl Sings Review

Written by Alaina L. Lewis

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The latest production to grace the stage of Penumbra Theatre is a piece that not only challenges the heart, but also reminds everyone who sees this production that within all of our differences comes a stroke of similarity.

Black Pearl Sings, a play set during the Great Depression, follows two dramatically diverse women on their quests to obtain their portion of one of life's Happy Endings. Susannah, a white researcher from the Library of Congress, is on a journey to immortalize the musical hymns sung "round the days of slavery" in order to secure a position with an Ivy League College- but only if she stumbles upon a song old enough to solidify her worth. Pearl is a prisoner in a Texas facility, who when her daughter comes up missing, devises a plan to sing her way into Susannah's life by trading fragments of her musical heritage for a ticket to freedom in order to search for her one and only daughter.

Throughout this two-woman production, we're hit with seasons of emotions that subdue and subject us through a whirlwind of changes. Through the use of music, we're able to travel through time and explore the dynamics of two women trapped inside the world of fallen notes, unspoken rhythms, and celebrated hymns. At first glance you question how these uniquely strong characters will find room to undo each others fears of the next person long enough to work together, but alas justice prevails in what seems like seconds and the two stroll into a partnership that is everything but a smooth ride.

Although the story reads clean-cut, when you brush over the synopsis this clever piece by playwright Frank Higgins, spoken through the lips of talented actresses Crystal Fox (Pearl) and Stacia Rice (Susannah), is tight ended with a trapdoor of critical content that'll leave you vulnerable to the messages hidden.

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The fascinating thing about Lou Bellamy, Director and Founder of Penumbra Theater, is that he's not afraid to bring a racially charged, powerfully dramatic production to the halls of his theater. *Black Pearl Sings* is like the sweetest sting that comes seconds after accepting the hit; it's raw, it's real, it's witty and life changing. It'll thump you in the heart and make you beg to forgive yourself for clinching to your anger, while accepting the tears. Simply put, it's history told through a genuine platform and it's rare to find a play packed with such a howling message that's lined with such a gentle spirit.

From the soulful music, to the clever stylings of two powerful actresses that captivate throughout the production, this play is a must see for any lover of theater and anyone ready to delve into a new theatrical experience. With *Black Pearl Sings* you'll learn a colorful message: in order to attain that Pot Of Gold, you have to be willing to consume all that comes with exploring the rainbow.