

## What the Critics are Saying About **Josephine Tonight**

“So hot it sizzles...a dream team of an ensemble...a great script, memorable songs, terrific director and talented cast. Finding that perfect combination is as rare as being graced by the extraordinary life spirit of Josephine herself...it doesn't take long to witness a star in the making in Zurin Villanueva. Her talent simply soars. First of all, she's got the look—long gangly arms and legs, lean torso, and a bright smile. Villanueva can do it all—sing and dance up a storm, keep your attention riveted to her every move, and keep you coming back for more. The musical numbers blend seamlessly to tell the story, and energetic dance-man Maurice Hines as director and choreographer, whips everything together in a delicious frothy mix. For a show to get it so right warrants a visit or two.” Debbie Jackson, *DCTheatreScene.com*

“*Josephine Tonight* is centered on an exuberant performance from Zurin Villanueva as Baker, a performer who can light up the stage with a 1,000-watt grin or beguile with a mischievous pout. Her Josie...transforms into an elegant, commanding star with a primal, powerful stage presence...a knockout night at the theater.” Missy Frederick, *Washingtonian*

“The late great Wally Harper's toe-tapping, jazzy, melodic swingin' score keeps the joint jumpin', and captures the feel of The Jazz Age...With lyricist and librettist Sherman Yellen (*The Rothschilds*) they have written three gorgeous ballads – “Pretty Is,” “Isn't She/Isn't He,” and the title song “Josephine Tonight.” I am confident that Wally Harper would have been ecstatic with David Alan Bunn's snazzy orchestrations, which are expertly played by a red hot 5-piece band... Designer Reggie Ray again has designed many colorful costumes, which echo many of the outrageous costumes of The Jazz Age and Baker's career. His tribal banana outfit he created for Villanueva is stunning and fun.” Eliot Lanes, *MDTheatreGuide*

“a fast-paced musical bonanza... As Josephine Baker, Zurin Villanueva...has all the right sass as she taps, struts and slinks into your heart with the ferocity of a lioness, capturing Baker's persona from gangly teen to the toast of Paris. Her sinuous interpretation of Baker's notorious banana dance...is mesmerizing... Aisha De Haas... plays two characters that are polar opposites, Baker's

mother, Carrie, and Big Bertha Smith, her confidante and mentor, yet she segues seamlessly between them. Her voice is a rich blend of powerhouse gospel, blues and red-hot sizzle, and when she delivers the number “Pretty Is” in the second act, it’s guaranteed she’ll rip your heart out. *Josephine Tonight* is sheer entertainment from start to finish with all the delicious ingredients to fast track it to Broadway – joke-cracking, high-stepping, hard times and love songs featuring a strong cast that delivers its emotional heat with heart and soul.” Jordan Wright, *Alexandria Times*

“Like the real Josephine, Villanueva is thin and gawky, showing off her thin legs in knockabout routines and crossing her eyes on occasion; she is utterly winning as she shows the progression from raw talent to incipient star quality... Reggie Ray has designed sumptuous costumes... Susan Berlin, *Talkin’ Broadway*

“Zurin Villanueva, a polished, vivacious and charismatic performer who brings a calculated and gawky juvenile grace to the role of young Josephine... dazzles the crowd with her footwork, her smile and her vocal agility... Aisha de Hass does dual duty as Josephine's mother, Carrie McDonald, and vaudevillian performer Big Bertha Smith... With vocals that soar to the rafters...” Jeanne Theismann, *Alexandria Gazette Packet*

“David Alan Bunn’s musical direction of Wally Harper songs brings the jazz age to life, along with Hine’s choreography and Reggie Ray’s evocative costume design.” Laura Fries, *Alexandrianews.org*

“director/choreographer Maurice Hines has filled the stage with crackling dance numbers and sharp acting... Harper and Yellen’s ragtime- and blues-inspired songs often sparkle with wit, melodiousness and infectious rhythm...” Jane Horwitz, *Washington Post*