

This 'Chorus Line' has plenty of star power

By MICHAEL BARNES

American-Statesman Arts Critic

Wow! More than one singular sensation emerged from "A Chorus Line" at the Paramount Theatre on Wednesday.

Let's see, there was Austin Musical Theatre, which produced this snazzy rendition of the revered 1975 musical about a Broadway audition. Then credit director Scott Thompson, who guaranteed that every musical number sparkled, each auditioner's personal story signified.

While we are at it, let's recognize the original creators, especially Michael Bennett, whose genius and dark personality haunt this show to its very soul. The words of James Kirkwood, Nicho-

las Dante and Edward Kleban — based on Bennett's workshops and interviews with show folk — still ring true in a sort of '70s group-therapy, group-think way. Let's not forget Marvin Hamlisch's first bombastic, then finespun, then bombastic score, which music director Don Hite brought to insistent life.

"A Chorus Line" is really about the single-named auditioners, whose careers teeter on the stage's taped line. No matter how many times you've heard the character Paul talk about his secret youth, Luis Villabon will move you with his show-stopping speech. (He's also one of the most accomplished dancers.) Jane Lanier disseminated star quality and more than a little wisdom as

'A Chorus Line'

When: Through Oct. 8

Where: Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave.

How much: \$22-\$57.75

Information: 469-7469

Cassie, although she held back too much in the jazzy solo, "The Music and the Mirror."

Mindy Paige Davis dedicated a tremendous voice and tart delivery to Val's cosmetic anthem "Dance: Ten; Looks: Three." Christine Langner summarized the cast's drive and devotion in her two numbers as Diana. Smoky-voiced lioness Tracy Powell soaked up attention as the maturing Sheila. Paul Hadobas

made an assured Zach, the zealous director, but I also noticed some proficient dancing from Kristoffer Cusick, Seth John Davis and Michael J. Jablonski in smaller roles.

Despite a few overstated performances on Wednesday, this was a near picture-perfect rendering of "A Chorus Line," better than the last six road versions that have zipped through Austin. In fact, I'd have to think back 25 years to recall when I was so entertained and affected by this musical. It proves once again that show business is just life business, with better singing and dancing — and a bigger finale.

You may contact Michael Barnes at mbarnes@statesman.com or 445-3647.



The practically perfect production of 'A Chorus Line' now at the Paramount Theatre beats the past six touring versions that have hit Austin.