

A Chorus Line Florida Theater

At one point in *A Chorus Line*, a character makes the now-ironic observation, "So what if we do get this part? It's going to end sometime. No show runs forever." After 11 years, 4,600 performances, several Tony awards and a Pulitzer prize, that statement is amusingly unprophetic.

For actors, this musical's special appeal is that it speaks directly to them about their struggles and fears, their hopes and dreams. For the rest of us, *A Chorus Line* speaks in universal terms about competition, the fear of failure and the need to be accepted for who and what we are.

Its approach is dramatically simple: A group of dancers is auditioning for a limited number of spots on a chorus line. As the cuts become more difficult, the director decides to do away with standard procedure and asks each dancer to reveal something about himself.

The result is a brilliant blend of dance and voice, of comedy and pathos, of self-fulfillment and self-realization. From the opening strains of "I Hope I Get It" to the dazzling finale, "One," *A Chorus Line* is one of the purest and most vital pieces of theater we may ever see.

Its tightly woven book carefully allows every player a chance to shine. Essentially, *A Chorus Line* is a series of emotional monologues that help us to empathize with every character, making the inevitable decisions about who gets a part all the more wrenching.

In this production, Carole Stevens is terrific as Sheila, a dancer who's well aware that she is swiftly approaching the end of her career. Stevens positively slinks across the stage, constantly reaching for another cigarette, another Valium, another chance at stardom. Debbie Birch also is quite good as Cassie, a dancer whose tangled past includes the director.

However, the most outstanding performance in the show belongs to Michael Alicia. He plays Paul, a young hopeful who poignantly and painfully recalls how his parents discovered that he was gay. Alicia is wonderful, breathing new life into a monologue that, after 11 years, may have lost its original shock value but still remains emotionally and dramatically compelling.

Of course, this is an ensemble in the truest sense of the word. The success of any individual performance is based on the work of the entire cast, all of whom perform admirably in their extremely demanding roles.

Technically, *A Chorus Line* is fine. Though the actors occasionally were unable to project clearly enough to be heard over the orchestra and though the uniform quality of their dancing made the final cuts seem more arbitrary than was originally intended, these are small points about an extremely satisfying show.

A telling footnote in the history of *A Chorus Line* concerns the cast members of the original Broadway production. Though the wildly successful musical made them instant stars, none were able to build upon their initial breakthrough. It seems fitting that, even for the original chorus line, fame remains ever so fleeting.