Season Opens With a Triumph

Dreamgirls by the Fort Wayne Civic Theatre is a triumph. A *tri-umph*!

On opening night the musical performance was flawless, the acting was moving, and the audience loved it. The show even included that rarest of Fort Wayne theater moments—the true show stopper—when the amazing Cherelle McGei nailed the song that made two Jennifers (Holliday and Hudson) stars: “(And I Am Telling You) I’m Not Going.” One audience member summed it up when she put it to me this way: “I’d pay a hundred dollars just to see the ‘Steppin’ To The Bad Side’ number again!”

An engine of talent has been building steam within Fort Wayne’s black community for many years, powering the international successes of the Unity Choir and dance, mime and step competition winners breaking into the changing music scene of the 1960s and 70s, using the trio of singers, their songs and the establishment of their own soul king as their levers, forming a type of chosen family, it shines from the stage and audiences feel the warmth. Good thing we’ve gotten used to temperatures in the 100s this summer!

Speaking of teamwork, music director Eunice Wade-witz is masterful in the show. Not only are the singers professional in quality, but the orchestra is excellent. This is a show full of complex harmonies and a broad range of song styles and rhythms, and, wonder of wonders, the audience was in tune and on key and a small-but-mighty pit orchestra free of random squeaks and squawks.

So who’s good? That’s easy: Everyone. Dwight Wilson, who doubles as director, plays Curtis Taylor Jr, as a man who is all about success. I particularly enjoyed his scenes in a red suit that reminded one of the devil as “Mr. Applegate” from *Damn Yankees*. Jason S. Gray is the gravel-voiced old-time music agent Marty. He’s the opposite of Curtis, continuously telling him that’s not how it’s done in the music business. Keontrell Taylor’s outstanding Jimmy Early does

Continued on page 29
Effie's Optimistic Songsmith Brother

Drew Shade as C.C. White, Effie's optimistic songsmith brother, fills the role with a sweet, trusting lightness that makes his solo on the other signature song from the show, "Family," all the more lovely and sad. Shade's C.C. also provides strong harmonies in the quartet numbers such as "Steppin' To The Bad Side," with Curtis, Jimmy, and Marty. As a counterpoint to C.C.'s big writing number, "Cadillac Car," Billy Dawson's Dave (of Dave and the Sweethearts) drops in to offer up the milquetoast, Pat Boone-style. Shade's C.C. also provides the basis for C.C.'s big writing number, "Cadillac Car," as a counterpoint to the show's other signature song, "Family." A.C.'s big writing number, "Cadillac Car," drops in to offer up the milquetoast, Pat Boone-style.