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Chicago welcomes *A New Musical*

CHICAGO IL- The beloved novel and movie was brought to life on the stage in Chicago. Directed by Michael Greif (Broadway: *Dear Evan Hansen* and *Rent*) and Schele Williams (Broadway: *Rent*, *Aida*, and *Motown: The Musical*), and music and lyrics by Ingrid Michaelson, *The Notebook: A New Musical* tied together the heart wrenching love story between Noah and Allie. Greif and Williams portrayed the three stages of life that Noah and Allie's love story takes place, late teens, late twenties, and early seventies.

Young Noah and Allie were played by John Cardoza and Jordan Tyson who portrayed young and intense love. While Ryan Vasquez and Joy Woods played the middle life crisis of longing for one another after ten years of separation. Older Noah and Allie were played by John Beasley and Maryann Plunkett who brought the show home with their powerful acts of love for one another through sickness. During the final scene with Beasley and Plunkett there was not one dry eye in the audience.

The Notebook movie starring Ryan Gosling, Rachel McAdams, James Garner, and Gena Rowlands goes through the story telling aspect of the relationship whereas the musical focused more on the reflection of Noah and Allie through the different milestones. All three Noah and Allies were seen frequently together on the stage thinking back to their younger selves which added a layer of artistic value to the already powerful story.

Musical Theatre major Annabella Mumma saw the show due to having watched the movie countless of times. "I enjoyed that the costuming and language somewhat took the story out of time," Mumma said, "while time is important in the story (the Vietnam War, mentions of finishing school, etc.), I think it is far more important to see it as a timeless story."

While the book and movie were a romantic drama with very few comedic reliefs, the musical had many comedic moments. Mumma also discussed this aspect of the show.

"The text from the show was far less formal than the movie, which at times I enjoyed, but it did take a bit away from the intensity of the situations and relationships." The only scene that stayed true to the magnitude of the situation and was not interrupted by a new joke was the last scene, however there was room for more genuine intense scenes.

Michaelson has been working on this adaption since 2017 when she shared the announcement on Instagram. "If this is love, why did no one tell me the pain that I would feel." This is one of many strong lyrics Michaelson wrote for this anticipated stage adaption.

"The composition was exquisite. The lyrics were a lot more story-based than some other shows that I have seen. It would have been nice to see a few more poetic songs, but I enjoyed that it had a style all its own." Mumma said.

Overall, writer of the script, Bekah Brunstetter (Emmy nominee for *This Is Us*) did a beautiful job of telling the original story by Nicholas Sparks while intermixing the amazing works of Michaelson and adding some modern elements. The cast gave a superb performance that had the audience entranced in the timeless love story.

There has been some speculation whether the show will go to Broadway after it's run at the Chicago Shakespeare theater, September 6- October 30, 2022. No matter what, we are honored that the show made its long-awaited debut in Chicago.