



Audrey Landers does a terrific job singing "Dance: Ten, Looks: Three," about a dancer who resigns her chaste, in "A Chorus Line."

the movies

Dan Greenberg

'A Chorus Line' has great dancing but weak storyline

There is a clever number in "A Chorus Line" (PG-13), "Dance: Ten, Looks: Three," that tells it all, for the "Chorus Line" choreography truly is a "ten" but the story is zero.

For a show that set so many records on Broadway and commanded a record purchase price for movie rights, it is a sad commentary on Hollywood intelligence when it comes to stomaching the limp and embarrassing excuse for storytelling in this major motion picture.

The film went through unusual trauma in the Hollywood process before it emerged under Richard Attenborough's ("Gandhi") direction. It is difficult to imagine a man of Attenborough's talent allowing release of "A Chorus Line" in its present state.

Auditions are being held for a chorus line as "A Chorus Line" opens and naturally the cattle call for dancers has brought out herds of dancers attracted by the lure of the Great White Way.

THIS NEW SHOW is being choreographed by Zach (Michael Douglas) with an able assist from Larry (Terrence Mann). Zach's mania for perfection and his driven, acerbic devotion to duty make him quite a bastard. He truly needs Larry's sensitivity and concern for others.

As the auditions proceed, enter Cassie (Alyson Reed), Zach's former lover who wants to dance again. Well, Zach is bitter that she went to L.A. and tells her to get out. So much for the "Chorus Line" plot -- and that's not much.

This lack of story is at the heart of the film's problem, "Dance: Ten, Story: Zero." In the synthetic reality of the Broadway musical stage, it doesn't matter. Audiences accept a limited plot as long as the songs and dances are exciting, romantic, moving and energetic.

The same is not true of motion pictures whose incredible surface realism makes us believe what we see on the screen.

The conventions of romantic Broadway musicals crumble when someone breaks into song and the camera zooms in for a close-up of every zit. The show's big number, "What I Did for Love," is effectively destroyed by the camera hovering around, over and under Cassie's rendition.

IT IS HARD to believe an accomplished director like Attenborough would miss this obvious point.

Nor is it easy to understand how Douglas, a talented performer and producer, would participate in such a debacle. His characterization of the hard-driven Broadway choreographer comes across as a caricature of a chain-smoking dyspeptic.

On the plus side, Larry is an engaging, caring human being rendered brightly by Terrence Mann, who leads the dancers and keeps things moving with a sense of humor and tenderness. He definitely needed a positive outlook to get through this story.

The original Broadway production was staged as an audition on stage and the film might have profited by staying inside as well. The gratuitous shots of Cassie riding a cab over a bridge into Manhattan and the little schticks with Cassie and Larry in the prop room and in the alley detract from the show's impact as a romantic about Broadway shows. Totally forget the stupid flashbacks of the Cassie-Zach love affair.

In spite of all this condemnation, "A Chorus Line" is filled with high-energy, exciting dance routines that make it entertaining and worthwhile. The intensity of the massed ensemble and the minimal characterizations of the principal contestants in the audition are the very best.

Several solos are particularly noteworthy: Charles McGowan's "I Can Do That," Gregg Burge's "Surprise, Surprise" and, of course, Audrey Landers' "Dance: Ten, Looks: Three."

If you figure out a way to get your popcorn while the story is on and get back to your seat for the dancing, "A Chorus Line" can be fun.



Michael Douglas lacks believability, appearing more like a caricature in his role of Broadway director-choreographer Zach.

auditions

Detroit Repertory Theatre's Milan Theatre Company will hold auditions for "Adventures of Stanley Tomorrow" by Alan Foster Friedman on Saturday at 13103 Woodrow Wilson in Detroit.

Actors Equity call is at 2 p.m.; general call at 3 p.m.

Anyone who plans to attend should call 888-1347. The audition will consist of reading from the play itself. Scripts are available for reading in the repertory office. A \$20 deposit is required

for scripts taken for overnight reading. The play is about the adventures of any 11-year-old boy, called "Stanley Lark 3," as told by a grown-up Stanley Lark 3 who in turn is married and has his own 11-year-old boy, "Stanley Lark 4." Three generations of Stanley Larks, all on stage at the same time, learn the lessons of life.

"Adventure" will be directed by Divina Cook. Performances will run Thursday, March 13, to Sunday, May 4.

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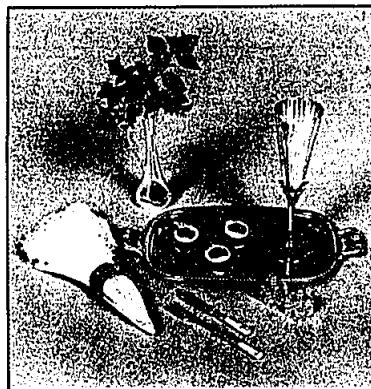
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