



The cast of *Victor/Victoria* performs at Brüka Theatre.

PHOTO/ERIC MARKS

Gender reveal

It's not often that a well-known stage musical follows the film version rather than the other way around, but this is the case with Blake Edwards' *Victor/Victoria*. The stage adaptation, which debuted on Broadway in 1995, pales in comparison to that luminous and, at the time, groundbreaking 1982 film with the gorgeous soundtrack and crackling on-screen chemistry among its stars, not to mention its incomparable star, Julie Andrews.

But for today's audiences, many of whom are unlikely to have seen the 37-year-old film, it's a lighthearted romp with dazzling costuming and bawdy jokes—the perfect thing for an easy summer evening. Done well, it's a fun three hours. Judging from an early, pre-opening sneak peek, Brüka Theatre's production does just that. The company clearly respects the material and sets out to do it justice.

Whether the themes and dialogue have aged gracefully may be another matter.

Set in 1930s Paris, the story opens on Carole "Toddy" Todd (played by Michael Peters), a gay, down-on-his-luck nightclub MC whose bawdy, offensive sense of humor is unappreciated by the customers at club Chez Lui.

Then in walks Victoria Grant (Amy Ginder), looking for a warm drink and, perhaps, a singing job. But her traditional soprano style doesn't impress the club owner. Toddy, however, warms to her, and the downtrodden pair begin commiserating about their circumstances. If she were a man, Victoria says, life would be so much easier.

Then Toddy is struck with a great idea: A man with that singing voice would be an anomaly, a show-stopper. He would be the toast of Paris. What if Victoria were that man?

The plan works. As Count Victor Grazinski of Poland, Victoria is now the

world's greatest female impersonator and an overnight sensation: a woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman.

Meanwhile, Chicago mob boss King Marchan (Jake Steinman) rolls into town with his bodyguard, Squash Bernstein (DJ Hope), and his ditzy blond girlfriend, Norma (Sophie Moeller). When sparks fly between Victoria and King, the plan threatens to derail.

Ginder's many talents shine in the role of Victoria, from her impressive singing voice to her comedic timing and remarkable facial expressions. But though she plays a character who literally steals her own show, it's Moeller's Norma who steals this one. She is adorably sexy, but has excellent comedic talents and is completely fearless on stage—an irresistible combination.

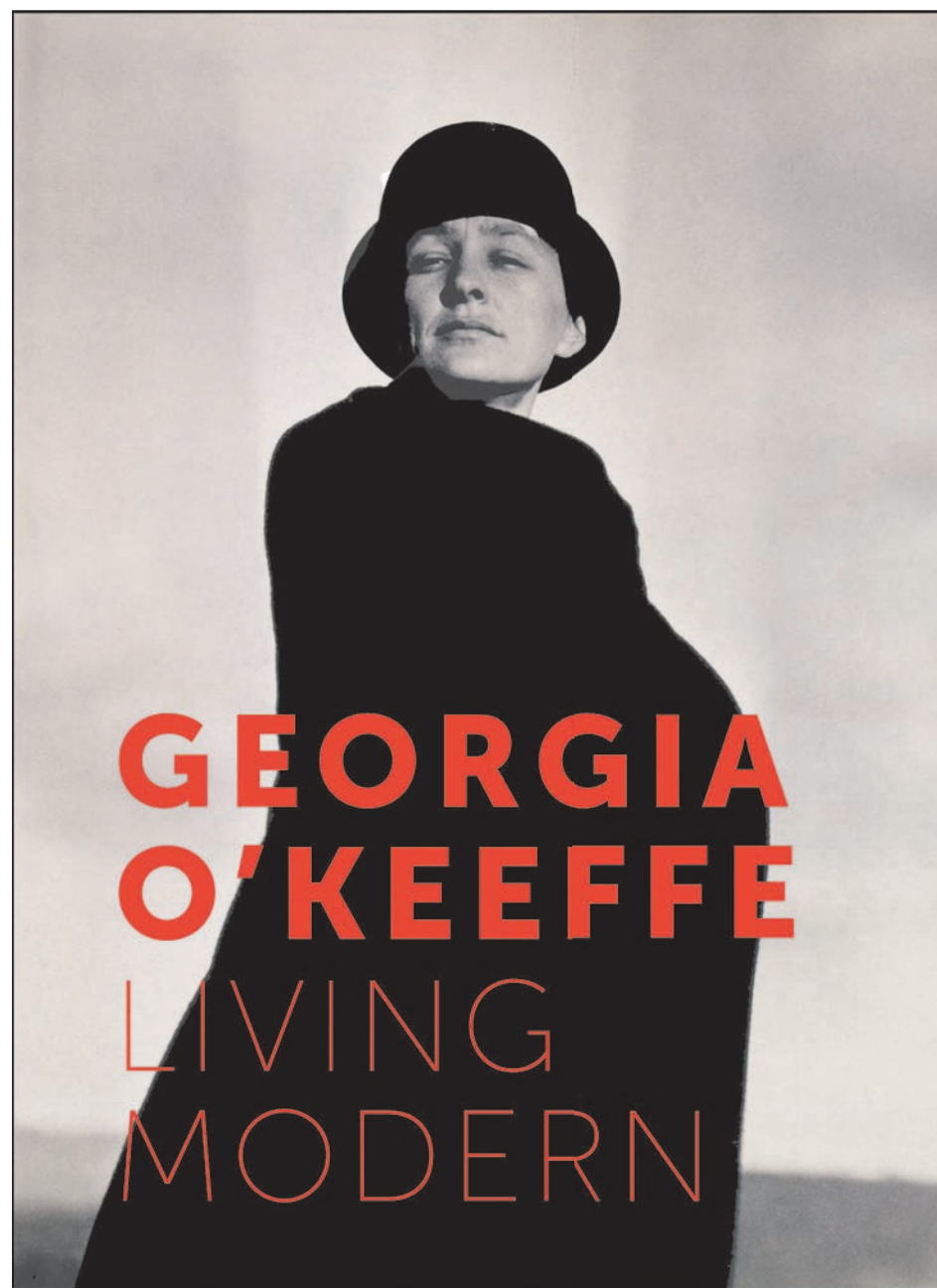
What doesn't work quite as well is Steinman's portrayal of King; there's little chemistry between him and Ginder, and his limited singing abilities are strained to the breaking point with the most ponderous songs in the show. Also somewhat lifeless are the ensemble dancers, who seem to bring little enthusiasm to their task.

It would be unfair and unreasonable to compare any stage version to the film, yet the comparisons are almost impossible to ignore. The stage version suffers from some unfortunate music changes—gone are some of my favorites, while the updated script is overly padded with new, forgettable tunes that weigh down the performances and lower the energy level. □

Victor/Victoria



Victor/Victoria, directed by Bill Ware, is at the Brüka Theatre—99 N. Virginia St.—June 27, 28, 29 and July 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27 at 7:30 p.m.; and June 30 and July 7 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$26 and \$24 seniors/students/military in advance. All tickets \$30 at the door. For information and to purchase tickets, visit www.bruka.org or call 323-3221.



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Georgia O'Keeffe: Living Modern is organized by the Brooklyn Museum and curated by Wanda M. Corn, Robert and Ruth Halperin Professor Emerita in Art History, Stanford University and made possible by the National Endowment of the Arts. IMAGE: Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864-1946). *Georgia O'Keeffe*, circa 1920-22. Gelatin silver print, 4½ x 3½ in. (11.4 x 9 cm). Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, Gift of The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation, 2003.01.006.