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## 'Xanadu': Pleasure decreed

Young talent having fun in a 1980 jukebox musical: Yes, its appeal is broad.



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Sonny Malone (C.J. Celeiro) and the Muses in Mazeppa Productions' "Xanadu." It's based on the campy 1980 Olivia Newton-John roller-skating movie.

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Wendy Rosenfield, *For The Inquirer*  
POSTED: Saturday, July 12, 2014, 3:01 AM

### The Inquirer

Before I proceed, I'll let *Xanadu*, Mazeppa Productions' summer musical offering, give itself a one-sentence review: "This is like children's theater for 40-year-old gay people!" a character announces.

That's as good a summary of the campy screen-to-stage adaptation/Electric Light Orchestra jukebox musical as any - except, with the benefit of this small company's let's-put-on-a-show enthusiasm, its appeal is far broader than that.

*Xanadu's* plot is very loosely based on the 1980 Olivia Newton-John vehicle. It doesn't really matter, but here it is anyway: Nine muses step out of a mural painted by a roller-skating artist, and one, Kira (Erica Nicole Rothman), falls in love with its painter, Sonny (C.J. Celeiro). They devise a plan in which an abandoned building will become a center for the lively arts, with roller skating. There's also something about a curse and a visit to Mount Olympus.

It's all linked together by Douglas Carter Beane's winking book, and Jeff Lynne and John Farrar's music; Newton-John's hit "Have You Never Been Mellow?" exhorts Zeus to chill out and let love rule.

This is an amateur production, to be sure, with a cast full of University of the Arts students and recent graduates, but it's also a showcase of sorts for some young, raw talent who certainly look like they're having fun. Rothman, its female lead, is poised, with a fine voice and deadpan comic timing, though she graduated from Fort Washington's Germantown Academy only last month, and Angela Leone's Melpomene can hurl a tune - "Evil Woman," in particular - with skill and power.

Their sense of fun is also infectious. Directed by Rob Henry and choreographed by Robert Harris, with a set by Brian Seaman, the actors roller-skate through a central runway, sing from the aisles, and in one case, tap dance on a desk. The runway creates some issues with audible dialogue (cast members are miked, but when they're far downstage, heads turned away, it's hard to hear them). But between performers zipping past and silly props - such as Pegasus depicted as a carousel pony rigged with Halloween-store angel wings - there's enough visual flash to make up for it.

While Kira sings, "You have to believe we are magic," it's clear Mazeppa is making some sweet stage magic, too.

## THEATER REVIEW

### Xanadu

Through July 26, at Christ Church Neighborhood House, 20 N. American St., presented by Mazeppa Productions.

Tickets: \$25. Information: 267-559-9602 or [www.Mazeppa.org](http://www.Mazeppa.org)

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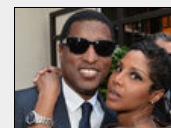
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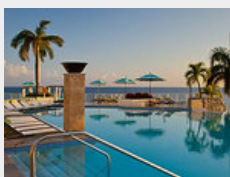


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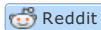
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**Wendy Rosenfield**

*For The Inquirer*



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