

AMATEUR YOUTH THEATRE REVIEW: Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat – Stage One 2000, Gladstone Theatre.



There is something enduringly joyful about *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Decades after Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice first brought this biblical story to the stage, it continues to offer young performers one of musical theatre's richest opportunities for storytelling, colour and ensemble work. Stage One 2000 embraced that opportunity wholeheartedly in their latest production at the Gladstone Theatre, delivering an evening that was vibrant, confident and filled with genuine theatrical joy.

Based on the well-known story from Genesis, *Joseph* follows the journey of Jacob's favoured son, who is gifted a magnificent coat that sparks jealousy among his brothers, leading to betrayal, slavery, imprisonment, and ultimately, forgiveness. It is a musical that relies heavily on pace, visual imagination, and sustained ensemble energy, and under the direction of Brenda Davies, assisted by Olivia Morrell, this production maintained all three with admirable consistency.

Directing a large youth cast of mixed ages and abilities is no small undertaking, yet this production never lost shape or momentum. Every scene felt carefully considered, transitions were smooth, and there was a clear understanding of how to keep each young performer actively engaged within the storytelling. That sense of structure was particularly evident in the seamless transition into the prison sequence, where lighting, props and staging combined effectively to shift the atmosphere without interrupting the flow of the narrative.



One of the strongest directorial successes came in *One More Angel in Heaven*. Here, the brothers demonstrated excellent comic timing, moving instantly from exaggerated celebration to feigned heartbreak with such clarity that the audience responded with audible laughter. It was one of several moments where physical theatre became a defining strength of the production. The brothers consistently brought natural humour to the stage, particularly during *Poor, Poor Joseph*, where their reactions, movement and collective energy made them impossible to ignore.



As a collective, Amelia Carter, Sean Gilroy Traynor, Rue Thomas, Chrisell Kenyon, Callum Bailey, Freya Smith, Roisin Cairns, Jake Fisher, Emilia Delaney, Mollie Elliott and Daisy Vernon gave a highly disciplined and entertaining ensemble performance. Their work throughout the evening demonstrated not only strong rehearsal but also a genuine connection as performers, supporting one another on stage while maintaining character and musical focus throughout.

The Narrators, Lily Criddle and Anna Phillips, carried the production with assurance and maturity. In a musical where the narrators are central to both pace and storytelling, both performers showed strong vocal control, excellent clarity and sustained characterisation throughout. Vocally they blended beautifully, while dramatically they maintained the confidence required to guide both audience and cast through every shift in tone and style.

Taking on the title role, Sam Darker delivered a thoughtful and committed performance as Joseph. It is a role that demands sustained vocal stamina, emotional consistency and strong stage presence, and Sam approached the challenge with admirable control. He remained fully in character throughout, anchoring the story with a calm confidence that allowed the more theatrical moments around him to flourish.



One of the most visually striking moments of the evening came during *Close Every Door*. Derek Boseley's lighting design throughout the production was exceptional, and this number demonstrated just how powerfully lighting can shape emotion. Candlelight, soft blue washes and delicate floral effects combined to create a scene of genuine beauty, while the stillness of the staging allowed the emotional weight of the number to land fully. It was visually one of the strongest moments of the evening.

Lighting was a defining feature throughout the production. The pixel wall became a creative instrument in its own right, constantly transforming the stage picture and removing any need for traditional scenic backdrops. In *Joseph's Coat*, colour flooded the stage with brightness and energy, while *Go Go Go Joseph* arrived with visual movers and a celebratory atmosphere that instantly lifted the production into party mode. The use of light to form a pyramid was particularly effective, creating strong visual storytelling through technical means alone. In *Who's the Thief*, sunset tones heightened tension, while the final *Any Dream Will Do* returned to a sunset palette that worked beautifully against the gold costumes, giving the ending warmth and visual cohesion.



The choreography by Alli Bentley-Jones, assisted by Libbie Bentley-Jones, demonstrated excellent understanding of both musical style and the capabilities of a youth ensemble. Rather than overcomplicate movement, the choreography prioritised clarity, storytelling and confidence, allowing every young performer to contribute successfully. Importantly, each performer looked secure in their movement vocabulary, suggesting thorough rehearsal and thoughtful choreographic planning.

There was pleasing stylistic variety across the evening: the country-western character of *One More Angel in Heaven*, jazz cane work in *Potiphar*, glitter-infused energy in *Go Go Go Joseph*, lyrical movement in *Close Every Door* and cheerleader-inspired sections that added pace and excitement. Particularly effective was the use of two dancers during *Close Every Door*, whose lyrical movement added further visual texture to an already beautifully composed scene.

A special mention must go to Sophie Roberts, whose featured dance work during *Those Canaan Days* brought considerable flair to the production. Her Apache-inspired dance break, including lifts and partner work, was executed with confidence and became one of the most memorable choreographic highlights of the evening. Supported by strong red lighting, the sequence gained additional dramatic tension and visual impact.

Alfie Greer's performance as Pharaoh proved to be one of the evening's biggest crowd-pleasers. His Elvis-inspired interpretation during *Song of the King* was delivered with charisma, comic confidence and complete command of the audience. He had the auditorium fully in the palm of his hand, and the staging of the number with performers arranged across varying levels, ensured that the wider ensemble remained visible and included throughout the spectacle.



Another particularly impressive visual composition came during *Joseph All the Time*. The brothers kneeling with their backs to the audience, while Joseph stood framed against the illuminated pyramid, created a striking image of authority and reconciliation. The surrounding ensemble in white, framing the central action through controlled arm gestures, gave the number one of the strongest stage pictures of the evening and, visually, one of the most effective versions of this sequence I have seen.

Costume designer Jenny King deserves enormous credit for the visual richness of the production. With over 200 handmade costumes, the sheer scale of work involved was evident throughout. Traditional styling blended beautifully with theatrical sparkle: red cowgirl skirts, black prison coats, white coral dresses and the striking blue-and-gold opening of Act Two all contributed to a constantly changing visual world. The Act Two opening in particular immediately re-energised the auditorium and created anticipation for everything that followed.

Props and set remained deliberately minimal yet highly effective. Inflatable camels, palm trees, chains and simple furniture pieces such as the couch allowed scenes to shift quickly without losing theatrical clarity. Hand props including ribbons, coloured fans, material fans and cheerleader pom-poms were integrated naturally into choreography, while Joseph's coat itself remained the visual centrepiece it should always be.

Benjamin Calypso brought another burst of colour and delight. Palm trees framed the stage, flower garlands enhanced the costumes, and the atmosphere genuinely felt like stepping into a tropical celebration. Its simple but effective choreography gave the scene a playful quality that felt almost like a children's party, full of colour, fun and infectious enjoyment.



Musically, the production was strongly supported by Sian James and the eight-piece orchestra. In a score as continuous and stylistically varied as *Joseph*, live music is crucial, and the band provided a strong, reliable musical foundation throughout. The orchestra supported young voices sensitively while maintaining the momentum and colour needed to sustain the pace of the production.

Perhaps the most moving aspect of the evening, however, lay beyond the technical achievement. Sitting alongside former Stage One 2000 performer Steph Fleetwood, who had herself played Narrator

in the company's 2019 production, offered a powerful reminder of what youth theatre truly leaves behind. Listening to her speak so fondly of her own memories made it clear that productions such as this are about far more than performance; they create confidence, belonging and memories that remain long after the final curtain.

That emotional truth was visible on stage throughout. The smiles were genuine, friendships obvious, and by the end of the performance, tears among the young cast revealed just how much this production had meant to them. These are the moments that become lifelong memories. Theatre offers young people something uniquely powerful: discipline, teamwork, confidence and joy, all discovered together under stage lights.

The awards presentation at the end of the evening beautifully reinforced that sense of community. Stage One 2000 not only celebrated individual effort and dedication, but also awarded a scholarship allowing one young performer to continue the following year without financial burden, a wonderful gesture that reflects genuine investment in the future of young artists.



As colourful streamers flew into the audience during the finale and the entire auditorium rose in a standing ovation, there was a clear sense that this had been more than simply a successful youth production. In truth, it surpassed many adult productions I have seen. The talent on stage was undeniable, and Stage One 2000 continues to demonstrate that the next generation of performers is already emerging with remarkable strength.

There is something deeply uplifting about watching young people experience pure joy through performance. Every smile on that stage felt real, every moment shared sincere, and each young performer shone brightly from beginning to end. This production was not only entertaining; it was a vivid reminder of why youth theatre matters so profoundly.



Reviewer: Abigail Bradbury – AMT Productions

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For anyone interested in following Stage One 2000 and keeping up to date with future productions, membership opportunities and all the exciting work they continue to do for young performers, you can follow Stage One 2000 on Instagram for updates, behind-the-scenes content and upcoming announcements:

https://www.instagram.com/stageone2000?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet&igsh=ZDNlZDc0MzIxNw==