



## Free Skate

Kevin Curran November 11, 2019 Reviews 0 Comments



### Rink Life – Lucky Plush Productions

With a name like Rink Life, you'd be forgiven for expecting the show to include roller skates and an upbeat pop soundtrack. When the first pair shuffles onto the floor at Steppenwolf's 1700 Theatre barefoot and providing their own accompaniment *a capella*, you may also be forgiven for wondering what you've gotten yourself into. But in stripping away those obvious trappings, Lucky Plush's new show manages to focus on what really matters and the result is a lovely evening that combines the joy of movement and the quiet importance of connection.



It was apparent throughout the show that all seven characters had distinct relationships with each other, and those connections were there whether they were talking, singing, or dancing. The biggest hurdle, I think, for people not used to non-traditional story formats, is that it can be harder to find those moments of connection. There is no problem with that here. In some ways, the show isn't about anything. There is no grand overarching plot, no major obstacle for the group to overcome. In another way though, the show is about ebb and flow of a group of friends navigating the familiar ups and downs that those friendships entail. Not just in spite of the dance, but

because of it, I had no problem following them throughout the show.

All the performers were excellent. And not just as dancers. All seven were athletic and graceful, certainly. Kara Brody, as the group's de facto leader was fantastic. There was something about the way she held herself while sliding across the floor on bare feet that looked *exactly* like a skater holding a pose on wheels. I can't do it justice in print, but it effortlessly sold the idea they were all on skates the whole time. They were also excellent singers and actors. Michel Rodriguez Cintra has impeccable comic timing and easy charm that makes it obvious why he has so many dance partners, even if he can't quite juggle them all successfully. The entire cast really are easily among the best singers, dancers, *and* actors I've seen this season.

Above all, the show was fun. There was a lightness to everything that helped propel the show. These actors clearly love dancing and that enjoyment spilled out into the show as a whole. The music was an array of recognizable pop tunes, given a little more depth by the harmony arrangements. Patrick Burns' brightly colored costumes evoked the 70s of the roller rink's heyday without being literally vintage. All of it put together, the show becomes a charming confection, sweet but not cloying.

This is an excellent production and was an absolutely delight to watch. I don't think a better argument could be put forth for the ability of a movement based performance to be just as connecting and communicative as speech or song. You have my permission to strong arm the dance theater skeptic in your life to see this show. Neither of you will be disappointed.



Highly Recommended

Reviewed by Kevin Curran

Presented November 7-17 by Lucky Plush Productions at Steppenwolf's 1700 Theatre, 1700 N. Halsted, Chicago.

Tickets are available in person at the box office, by calling 312-335-1650 or by going to [www.steppenwolf.org](http://www.steppenwolf.org).

Additional information about this and other area productions can be found by visiting [www.theatreinchicago.com](http://www.theatreinchicago.com).