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Immortals cavort in new musical at Mich. State Summer Circle

REVIEW

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LANSING, Mich.—The Greek gods and goddesses are a popular topic among young people. They tickle the imagination the way superheroes do—beings with special powers that have been around forever.

Rob Roznowski took these powerful beings and placed them in the most awkward of places—junior high. Ever wonder what the goddess of love would be like in middle school? Here's your chance to find out.

Mount Olympus Junior High, currently being performed in free shows outdoors at Michigan State University's Summer Circle, is a children's musical featuring Demi, a half-god/half-mortal who is attending junior high with Aphrodite, Apollo, Athena and Poseidon. While these gods are powerful, they are also at their most awkward.

Kristy Allen plays Athena, a nerd who is as smart as they come, but lacks any sort of social skills. Allen emphasizes her oddity by stiff movements, nerdy hand gestures and stern facial expressions. She brings out all that a super-smart goddess would look like in the throes of adolescence when she hasn't quite grown into herself just yet.

Aphrodite is a bit ditzy and caught up in falling in love. Played by Hannah Martin, she creates a shallow young woman obsessed with beauty and with Apollo. She's the popular girl who turns into a stuttering mess around the object of her affection. Martin is cute in the role, capturing the aura of the pretty teenager who has more than a little of the mean girl inside her.

Lukas Jacob is quite amusing as Apollo, the shiny sun god, who is obsessed with himself and how wonderful he is. He struts and he poses, bragging about how great he is. Jacob is especially delightful when he looks right over Aphrodite as she tries desperately to get his attention.

Jacob Covert plays Poseidon, the dumb one whom the others make fun of. He's a great swimmer, but he doesn't have much else going for him. Covert finds the perfect blank expressions and looks of confusion that egg the others on.

Then there are all the teachers, the secretary, the choir director, the coach, Medusa. All these roles are picked up by Greg Hunter who switches in and out of hats, beards and costume accessories. He exaggerates each role nicely, creating fun in every scene.

Central to the play is Katelyn Hodge, Demi, the only non-god or goddess. While the other characters are written to be one-dimensional, hers is not. She's a well-rounded character who shows up the others by contrast. Hodge is vulnerable and sensitive in the role of the outsider who wants to fit in among these deities who are obsessed with their own power. She connects well with the others on stage and creates a down-to-earth character living up among the clouds.

The story is one designed to appeal to fans of Percy Jackson and Harry Potter, with elements of both those series showing up in the musical. It will also have its draw for any child who aches to fit in or to feel special among others who seem more "special" than they are. The music, written and performed by Seth Burk, is bright and cheerful. The songs aren't necessarily memorable, but they help move the story along and keep it entertaining.

As is common with a children's show, there is interaction with the audience. The characters move in and out of the audience area, frequently breaking the fourth wall. Demi appeals to the children and invites them to join her up on stage. Before the show, the playwright passes out Mount Olympus activity books and the gods and goddesses come out to sign them for kids.

All told, the show is cute without ever getting heavy. It deals with acceptance and finding one's true self, but it never gets preachy. And while the setting is junior high, the target audience is much younger and it's an entertaining night for the whole family.

Click here for show days, times and details.

Read more about [Mount Olympus Junior High 06/10-06/18](#)

Read more about [Michigan State University Summer Circle Theatre](#)