

# PROVIDENCE Journal

**Theatre By The Sea: Lighthearted '60s vibe enlivens 'Joseph'**

**By Channing Gray**  
**Special to The Journal**

***“Joseph” is a simple, basic musical with no life-changing messages. But Richard Sabellico, who helmed last season’s “Music Man,” kept you hanging on every scene, thanks to wacky, unexpected details.***

The tale is biblical, and the look is all bell-bottoms and tie-dye. But Theatre By The Sea’s sizzling production of “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” seems as fresh as ever, thanks to a knockout lead, high-stepping dance moves and forward-thrusting direction from Richard Sabellico that just won’t quit.

Luke Steinhauer, a buff Joseph, is phenomenal, a likable actor with a big, warm voice and spellbinding delivery. His soaring “Close Every Door” was the high point of the first act. Then at the end of the show, Steinhauer sat on the edge of the stage, said a few words to a packed house and gave a heart-melting reprieve of one of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s more masterful tunes.

Marie Eife, a lanky redhead, had just the sort of presence and vocal prowess needed to bind up the show as the narrator.

Michael Williams was right on target, too, as an Elvis-impersonating pharaoh, who elevates Joseph from shackled slave to right-hand man because of his gift for interpreting dreams. If you haven’t seen this Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice classic, it’s the Bible with a 1960s spin that borrows its musical styles from such diverse sources as country and western, doo-wop and calypso.

And local favorite Tom Gleadow took on several roles, including Joseph’s glum father, Jacob, and made them all sparkle.

“Joseph” is a simple, basic musical with no life-changing messages. But Sabellico kept you hanging on every scene, thanks to wacky, unexpected details, such as diners banging out tunes with forks and plates, and knives clinking against water glasses. Somehow, Sabellico managed to shoehorn this epic musical into Theatre By The Sea’s cramped stage, while keeping it joyous, upbeat and infectious. He more than managed to tap into the show’s considerable humor and lightheartedness, while his choreography had a ’60s vibe, with the occasional cartwheel and split thrown in.

If you haven’t read the Good Book lately, the musical is based on the story of Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers because he was a favorite son given a gold-lined coat with a rainbow of colors.

But he rises to fame, after he warns the Egyptian pharaoh that his dreams indicate a period of prosperity followed by famine and that he’d better prepare for the worst. It is during the famine that Joseph’s brothers begin to think he might not have been so bad after all and head for Egypt and eventual reconciliation.

The show is staged, however, as a “traveling salvation show,” where the cast comes trooping down the aisles in the opening moments with the props and pulls Steinhauer from the audience. I would have liked the show to have ended with Steinhauer singing that killer solo of his. But that’s when Sabellico pulls out all the stops. The theater glitters under the twinkling lights of a disco ball and the cast launches into a somewhat long-winded revisiting of the show’s high points. But then spectacle sells and “Joseph” has plenty of spectacle.

It’s definitely the best thing Theatre By The Sea has done this summer.

*“Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat” runs through Aug. 12 at Theatre By The Sea, 364 Cards Pond Rd., Wakefield. Tickets are \$52-\$75. Call (401) 782-8587, or visit [theatrebythesea.com](http://theatrebythesea.com).*