

## Sample Review #2

**Josee Molavi**  
**Severna Park**

Submitted for publication to *The Gateway*

Mount De Sales Academy's production of the beloved "tale as old as time", "Beauty and the Beast", begins with the story of a prince and an enchantress scorned. A spell is cast, and the prince and those in his castle are condemned until he can open his heart and learn to love again. With a cast of misfit lovers, household objects, place settings, vain hunks, silly girls and more, the poor provincial town bustled on MSDA's stage as the story of Belle and the Beast came to life.

Leading actress Emma Romeo shined as Belle, with the princess-like temperament any stage production of a beloved Disney tale requires. In moving scenes and ballads, she personified the Belle we all know and love. Michael Stromberg took on the role of the oh-so self-obsessed Gaston and flaunted a strong baritone and an imposing presence alongside his sidekick, the entertaining Henry O'Toole as LeFou. The two made a great villainous pair and showed a mastery of physical comedy.

The household objects of the Beast's castle absolutely made the show. With each character committing fully to his or her individual accents and mannerisms for the entirety of the show, the bunch was truly magical to watch onstage during numbers like "Human Again". Foils and partners in crime Stephen Kirby as Cogsworth and Connor Hurley as Lumiere, as well as Samantha Sheldon as Babette kept the show moving quickly and added comedy to even the smallest of scenes. Warm alto Rebekah Balick as Mrs. Potts and soaring soprano Mary Langley as Madame de la Grande Bouche added beautiful vocals to every number in which they sang. Hurley as Lumiere delivered a show-stopping "Be Our Guest", a bright, lively musical number which featured both the ensemble and main characters' array of dance skills and vocals. The Napkins as a featured dance ensemble wowed the audience, energetically performing alongside the dishes and cutlery.

The MSDA Set Crew expertly illustrated each setting of the town, utilizing the wings of the stage as well as the alcove above to bring depth and dimension to the set. Each mobile set piece effectively broke up the space, such as the rotating flat with the outside door on one side and Belle's room on the other. Scene changes coincided precisely with the musical interludes and curtain operation, alluding to the hard work and expertise of Josie Hyde, Mystee Delgado, Madeleine Austin, Jenni Kelleher and the MSDA Stage Crew. Though minor sound issues sometimes interfered with the robust sound the cast was producing, the crew gave a valiant effort and overall kept the show running smoothly and without error or interruption.

At the close of the show, the cursed spell is broken, and Belle watches as the Beast transforms back into his princely state. The audience was on its feet as the cast of MSDA's Beauty and the Beast sang the final chords to end an enchanting evening.