

Outstanding sad drama

REVIEW

Miss Saigon.

Directed by Stephen Robertson, Regent on Broadway. Runs until July 29.

Reviewed by Michelle Duff.

Last night, the audience at the Regent on Broadway was swept away to the steamy streets of Saigon.

There they were told a story of a Vietnamese mother's love for her son, and for an American man who she ultimately could not have.

The heartwrenching tale that is *Miss Saigon* was played to a full house on opening last night.

Every twist and turn in the timeless story was captivating – and if there was a dry eye left at it's finish, this reviewer didn't see it.

Freelance director Stephen Robertson spent three months putting the actors and singers the majority local, through their paces for this show.

The professionalism showed.

The story follows Vietnamese woman Kim as she falls in love with American GI Chris, before the fall of Saigon to Communist forces during the Vietnam war.

Chris and Kim are torn apart, but not before their romantic liaison leaves Kim with a son, Tam. What follows is beautiful and devastating.

The cast are superb, with American actress Melinda Chua setting the standard with her gripping rendition of the lead role of Kim.

The pairing of her and Palmerston North actor Bradford Meurk as Chris is perfect. Their chemistry is palpable, their acting authentic, their voices complementary.

Scott Andrew is absolutely brilliant as the engineer, a pimp who bullies Kim into selling herself. He's slimy and sneaky, crawling from scene to scene with a thinly-veiled contempt for anyone who's not him and when he's on

stage alone, he owns the moment.

Baritone Chris Crowe takes on the role of John with aplomb, and Carrie Green plays a Vietnamese prostitute with empathy and real feeling.

The sets are amazing, extravagant yet intimate, creating everything from the glitzy glam of the American dream to the tired-looking, worn out shell of Kim's bedroom.

Special mention must be made of the scene where Chris leaves Saigon, with a distraught Kim left with hundreds of others outside the American embassy as a rising Iraqouis takes him away.

The ensemble cast act as devastated Vietnamese, begging to be taken to America for a better life. Like so much else in this story, it's incredibly sad and also very real.

If there's one show you go and see this year, *Miss Saigon* should be it. It's musical theatre at its best, and right here in Palmerston North.