

Broadway Review

It is easy to see why *The Band's Visit* won 10 Tony Awards

by Alexandra Cohen



Photo: Matthew Murphy

There are many reasons to travel to New York City, but one most unique to the city's soul is the extensive list of amazing Broadway musicals found at the heart of Times Square. Let me recommend, in particular, the 10-time Tony Award winning Best Musical, *The Band's Visit*. (www.thebandsvisitmusical.com).

Playing at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre (243 West 47th Street), the production recently welcomed award-winning Israeli actor Sasson Gabay to the company in his Broadway debut. He is reprising the character he created in the 2007 film on which the musical is based.

Following the Tony Awards on June 10, *The Band's Visit* is now tied as the third most Tony Award-winning show in history. As the musical begins, a series of well-intentioned mistakes land an Egyptian Police Band in a sleepy and remote village in the middle of the Israeli desert, which its inhabitants label as "boring" and "bland." One of the central characters, Dina (played with great magnet-

ism by Tony Award-winner Katrina Lenk), describes the mood of her town best in the opening number, as "looking out into the distance even though you know the view is never going to change"

With no bus until morning and no hotel in sight, the band are taken in by the locals for one night that will in some way or another, change all of their lives. *The Band's Visit* celebrates the deeply human ways in which music, longing and laughter can connect us all.

Although I must say that I expected this show to be quite serious in nature, I was pleasantly surprised by the simultaneous comic undertones. Although the Alexandria Ceremonial Police Orchestra are meant to perform at the Arabic cultural center in Petah Tikvah, Israel, a member of the band with poor English skills accidentally sends them to the similarly pronounced destination of Bet Hatikvah "with a B," eliciting many laughs from the audience.

Although they are different, as shown in certain moments by the characters speaking their respective languages rather than English, they are also in many ways the same, and if that is not a universal message that this world needs, then I do not know what is.

The North American Tour of *The Band's Visit* will launch in Providence, Rhode Island in June 2019. Exact dates and additional cities will be announced at a later date.

When in town to experience a piece of Broadway we recommend you stay at the historic Alonquin Hotel (www.alonquinhotel.com). Located in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, this jewel of historic New York hotels commands 44th Street near 6th Avenue, just a short walk of a block and a half away from Times Square. Each of the 181 rooms and 25 suites features a comfortable well-lit work desk, as well as complimentary Wi-Fi.

As for a pre-show dinner, master chef Geoffrey Zakarian's restaurant The Lambs Club (www.thelambsclub.com) offers Zakarian's modern approach to American cuisine with distinct ingredients, highly seasonal menus, and a signature approach to hospitality. It is located just up the street from The Algonquin at 132 West 44th Street. We very much enjoyed our meal at the the 90-seat restaurant. From a house-smoked pastrami sandwich for lunch and a Creekstone 28-day, dry-aged Delmonico steak at supper, the menus here touch all of the bases. ■



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