

Newbury Musical Theatre Company Brings *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* to Life This Weekend



Pictured: the Main Stage cast of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* during rehearsal at Southbury Parks & Recreation

By Kelly Keenan, SACA

If your knowledge of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* begins and ends with "there's a guy with a really colorful coat," don't worry, I've got you covered. I began my research on a warm Monday evening in July, where the cast and crew gathered at Southbury Parks and Recreation to rehearse "Joseph Megamix," one of the musical's most energetic numbers. After taking it all in, I circulated a few questions, starting with this: *What exactly is this show about?* As it turns out, the answers are almost as colorful as Joseph's famous coat.

Amanda Magurne, who plays a wife and ensemble member, calls it "the origin story of the 12 tribes of Israel told as only Andrew Lloyd Webber can: through music!" Matt Angrisani, who plays Judah, offers a more dramatic take: "After being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, a young man rises to greatness through his ability to interpret dreams." Ian Chin, who plays Naphtali, describes it as "a biblical story of love, hate, ingenuity, treachery, forgiveness, & redemption, with a fun, iconic score."

Christopher "CJ" Zold, who plays Benjamin, sums it up this way: "Joseph is spoiled and pampered by his father and this leads him on a wild journey to work his way back up the social ladder of society."

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There's a reason Joseph has been packing theaters for more than five decades. Depending on the scene, you might find yourself at a country hoedown, an Elvis concert, a calypso party, or a full-blown disco. The cast says that musical variety is exactly what keeps audiences coming back.

"I think 'Joseph's' staying power comes from the many different styles of music included in the score," Magurne said. "There's a little something for everybody!" Serafina Wojcik, who plays a wife and dancer, echoed that sentiment: "I think Joseph has remained so special and loved because it really does have something for everyone. There's music, dancing, and a whole lot of comedy. What's not to love?" Morgan McCann believes the show's themes are just as timeless as its music: "The values and themes of dreams and determination still ring true to today." Chin agrees, pointing to both the score and the story itself: "The music is very catchy and the source material is the Bible, so it has universal source material."

Wojcik and McCann both picked the high-energy hoedown "One More Angel in Heaven" as their favorite song. "It's high energy and you get to be really silly," Wojcik said, while McCann called it "so fun and lively." Magurne loves the Elvis-inspired "Pharaoh's Dream." "It's just so much fun to dance, and it's so catchy you can't help but bop along!" Narrator Bella Delgado is partial to another crowd favorite: "I love Benjamin Calypso! It is such a fun song and it breaks up some of the seriousness in the second act. It is just so funny and unexpected!"

A production with nonstop music, elaborate costumes, and nearly constant choreography comes with its share of challenges. For Magurne, it was mastering the famous list of colors in Joseph's coat: getting all 29 colors "in the correct order and in harmony (LOL)!" For McCann and Chin, the intricate harmonies proved the biggest hurdle. "Andrew Lloyd Webber makes beautiful but difficult musical harmonies," Chin said. Bella Delgado pointed to the sheer scope of the production: "With SO many moving parts there is a lot for the cast to remember... The show never really stops, so we're pretty much all on the stage from start to finish." Matt Angrisani agreed that the show's music-and-movement-driven structure, without traditional dialogue, made for a steep but rewarding learning curve.

The payoff, though, has been worth it. Magurne credits choreographer Christine with building her confidence: "She really worked hard to make the dances accessible for everyone in the cast. I was nervous when she put me up front in 'Pharaoh's Dream,' but her belief in my ability pumped up my confidence, and now it's my favorite number in the show!"

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Pictured: Jim Tornatore (Director), Cynthia Servetas (Producer), Stephanie Tornatore (Musical Director, Conductor), Austin Zold (Musician)

Family extends well beyond the script. Several real-life families share the stage, including Matt Angrisani, who performs alongside both his brother and nephew. "I play one of Joseph's eleven brothers," he said. "What I enjoy most is sharing the stage with my real-life brother and my nephew for the first time." Even for those who aren't related, the cast has developed a close bond. Chin said rehearsals have been especially memorable because "Being with the brothers and goofing around has been surprisingly fun. We are a very rowdy bunch." McCann sees that spirit reflected in community theater itself: "At its core, community theater is really just one big growing family." Wojcik agrees, saying, "It's been a real honor to become a part of this family the cast has become. Family is the only word for it really. We have our moments, but we always work it out and keep working to make something wonderful."

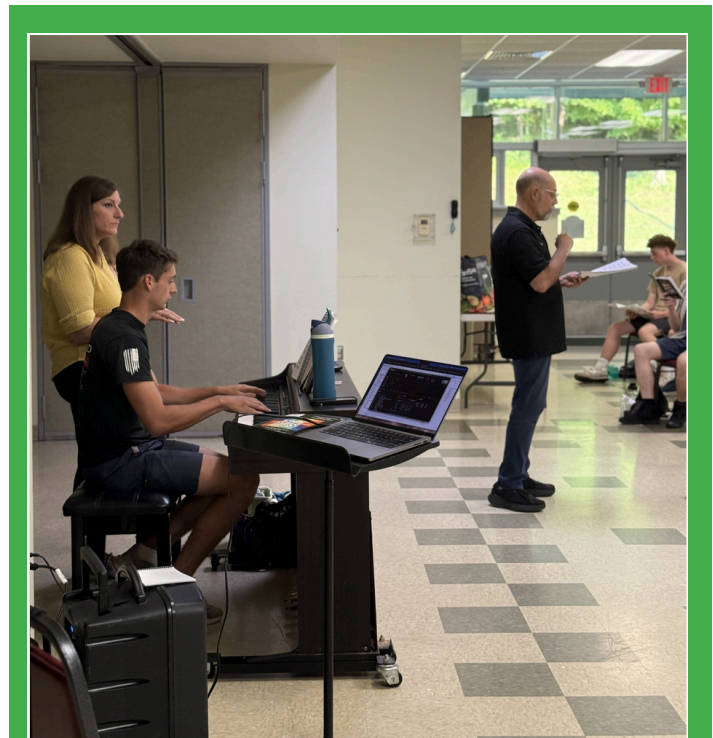
At its heart, Joseph is a story about family, forgiveness, perseverance, and hope. Matt Angrisani sees those themes as inseparable: "They all play different but equally important parts of all of our lives. Having too little of any of these can leave a person unfulfilled."

"Families are complicated," Magurne reflected. "Whether you have 1 sibling or 11, we can all relate to vying for our parents' attention, praise, and approval. In the show, as well as in life, eventually you come to understand it was never a competition, just a charge: to love one another." Chin was moved most by the show's message of forgiveness: "Even after everything Joseph goes through, he forgives his brothers. He doesn't let anger or guilt stop him from helping and loving people... There's never a point where you can't repent or ask for forgiveness. Even if you don't get that forgiveness from those people, the act itself, like a prayer, shows intention and the want to change for the better."

Several cast members making their Newbury Musical Theatre Company debut were struck by how welcoming the experience has been. "Being new to the company, it felt really good to be welcomed by the production team, as well as the cast," Magurne said. She also praised the younger performers: "I've also really enjoyed watching all the talented young people we have in the show — they're seriously amazing!"

Delgado shared the same experience: "I can't say enough wonderful things about how welcoming everyone has been. Everyone is so supportive of their castmates and encouraging." She added that bonding with fellow narrator Jenna has been a particular highlight: "We've really bonded over the experience and I am so grateful for that."

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Pictured: Cast and crew rehearsing



Pictured: Jacob and his sons (left), the cast working through "Joseph's Megamix" during rehearsal (right)

Without giving too much away, several cast members teased moments audiences won't want to miss. "Joseph's coat is an incredible costume piece, I can't wait for the audience to see it!" Magurne said. McCann agreed: "I'm really excited for the audience to see all of the costumes, especially the star, Joseph's coat." Wojcik, who helps with costuming alongside her mother, Jennifer Wojcik, is especially proud of her own look: "My Apache dancer costume is one of my favorite costumes I've ever had in a theater or ballet production, so I'm excited to have people see it." Delgado is especially excited for audiences to meet Joseph's brothers: "They are creating incredible moments throughout the whole show and it has been so much fun to watch them develop and own their characters!"

Asked why audiences should attend, the cast's answer was nearly unanimous: because it's fun—and because supporting local theater matters. "Obviously, people should come to the show because it's awesome!" Magurne said. "But also because supporting the arts is important, perhaps now more than ever. We live in a world fraught with conflict, fear, and uncertainty — Joseph and his coat remind us to dream of what's possible when the many colors of the world come together."

Delgado hopes audiences leave inspired: "I hope when the curtain falls they not only recognize the hard work everyone has put in, but they also feel inspired to follow their dreams." McCann hopes viewers hold onto the show's central message: "No dream is a worthless or impossible one, they just take time."

Supporting local arts is very important," Angrisani said. "Everyone in the show worked hard to create something entertaining." Chin left little room for hesitation: "If you like musical theatre, biblical lessons, and a fun time, you should totally see it! It's a lot of great music and a good lesson at the end. The cast is full of talent. The songs will definitely get stuck in your head. Do it!"

Newbury Musical Theatre Company presents Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat on Friday, July 24, at 7 p.m., Saturday, July 25, at 7 p.m., and Sunday, July 26, at 2 p.m. at Nonnewaug High School in Woodbury.

SCAN FOR TICKETS

