



Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat **at Palace Theatre, Manchester**

Reviewed by [Matthew Dougall](#) October 2017

First written as a short, 20-minute piece for school children to sing, this was Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Tim Rice's first public airing way back in 1968! Since then it has been adapted and expanded ad nauseam into the show we have today.

Based very loosely on the story of Joseph in the Book Of Genesis, it tells of aging father Jacob and his 12 sons. Joseph was one of the youngest brothers but was his favourite son and so came in for a lot of jealousy from his brothers. One day, when his father had a special multi-coloured coat made for him, his brothers found this a step too far and sold him off into slavery in far-away Egypt. After working as a slave and spending a long time in prison, he is sent to the Pharaoh to interpret one of the King's dreams. This is something he has found he has a talent for. He tells the Pharaoh that after seven years of plentiful harvest there will be

several more where drought and famine will stalk the land, and so Pharaoh tasks him with preparing for this by rationing the food supply in the plentiful years. Back in Canaan the future looked rough, and Jacob's family were finding it tough (a-hem, sorry). So they travel to Egypt and in the end are reunited with their brother and all ends happily.

However, I am sure I do not need to tell you that when it comes to historical accuracy, there is scant regard for it in this truly feel-good family-friendly upbeat show. With the tongue very firmly set in the cheek, and the emphasis on high energy entertainment, this Musical has outlived many and continues to shine simply because the tunes are all catchy, the jokes are corny and the whole thing is colourful and spectacular.

Fans of both the Musical and its current star **Joe McElderry** were not disappointed this evening. The Musical hasn't changed much these last 20 or so years - although a new-for-me song called King Of My Heart sung by The Pharaoh has found its way in there somehow without my noticing it. It still has the ability to delight and appeal to those, who, like me, have seen the show perhaps more times than they care to remember. I have also seen countless Josephs, some much more capable and pleasing than others, and McElderry, although not the best I have ever witnessed certainly had the charisma and ability to carry it off with style. I found him a very personable entertainer and easy to watch.

Helping him along on his journey were an array of talented performers. A group of eleven talented young men sang, danced and hammed up their way through the delightfully silly songs from French Chanson to Jamaican Calypso with panache. These were **Ben James-Ellis, Joseph Peacock**

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Ben Beechey

,
Richard J Hunt

,
Craig Nash

,
Rob Wilshaw

,
Michael Lapham

,
Matt Jolly

,
Will Breckin

,
Adam Strong

, and making his professional debut with this company, and doing a wonderful sterling job too,
was

Tatenda Madawombe

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The Narrator in the show was **Trina Hill** who had a lovely singing voice which got surprisingly high and sassy at one point; but sadly for me the weakest link in the show was Ben James-Ellis' Pharaoh. This role has always traditionally been performed as an Elvis tribute song, and although Ellis did look very Elvis-like, his voice and mannerisms not so much, and overall it was really quite weak - especially when he is playing a King (x2 - Pharaoh and Elvis).

Putting personal gripes aside though, this show will get you dancing and singing in the aisles and ensure you leave with a big grin on your face. Directed and produced by **Bill Kenwright**, there is just the right balance between cheesy humour and narrative, and with colourful costumes and set with the odd pyrotechnic flash, this is truly a show for young and old alike.