

[seattletimes.com](https://www.seattletimes.com)

# Review: Tina Fey's 'Mean Girls' musical comes to Seattle's Paramount Theatre

Nov. 17, 2021 at 12:41 pm Updated Nov. 17, 2021 at 1:23 pm

4-5 minutes

---

Raise your hand if you have ever felt personally victimized by Regina George.

If you raised your hand, then you'll be saddened to know that [iconic line](#) is missing from the touring Broadway production of "Mean Girls" that opened at the Paramount Theatre on Tuesday night. Adapted in 2018 from the movie of the same name, and originally scheduled to perform in Seattle as part of the pandemic-canceled Broadway at the Paramount season, it will play through Nov. 21. Directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw, "Mean Girls" features a book by Tina Fey, based on her screenplay for the 2004 film.

"Mean Girls" follows Cady Heron (Lindsay Lohan at her peak in the movie; Danielle Wade here), the home-schooled child of scientists in Kenya as she adapts to high school in suburban Illinois where she becomes involved with the school's most powerful frenemies, the Plastics. At first impressed by the clique, Cady devises a plan to take down their leader, Regina George, after her betrayal over

— what else? — a boy (charmingly portrayed by Adante Carter on stage).

Like “The Breakfast Club” and “Heathers,” “Mean Girls” is a classic for teens of its era. It hits the standard high-school-movie story beats: an outsider protagonist learns from bad choices while navigating and ultimately dismantling their school’s social hierarchies before forming more authentic relationships. The strength of “Mean Girls” lies in Fey’s dialogue, which straddles the line between ridiculous and relatable. Aside from “The Big Lebowski,” probably no other film has contributed as many memorable quotes to pop culture.

Fortunately, most of those cherished one-liners make it to the stage. Where they are lost, they are often sacrificed in favor of spoon-feeding the audience earnest feminist messages that dull Fey’s usually sharp humor. (“Bliss,” which played at the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave just days before the first pandemic lockdown, handled the “be yourself and play nice” message [with more heart](#).) Ironically, this leaves most of the best jokes to male characters, especially Eric Huffman’s Damian.

However, some of the changes are welcome. It’s nice to see Karen (Jonalyn Saxer), one of the Plastics, as more than a dumb-blond joke, and Africa is no longer treated as a country. The handling of the burn book, a scrapbook of insults, as a plot device in the social media age is well managed, even if the song “Stop,” which advises online impulse control, isn’t particularly strong.

Several songs are paint-by-numbers. “It Roars” sounds like it was rescued from “Frozen” or “Tangled” edits. A sort of nasal style is so ubiquitous it seems intentional — maybe an attempt to sound

Midwestern, or replicate a teenage whine? It can work for a single character, but spread across the cast, it's cumulatively annoying. Even so, Mary Kate Morrissey's Janis gives a fierce rendition of "Apex Predator." It has interesting music and choreography that transforms dancers from mallrats to wildlife. Fan favorite "Meet the Plastics" met with cheers on opening night even before Nadina Hassan delivered Regina George's Bond-girl theme. Megan Masako Haley (Gretchen) in "What's Wrong With Me?" and April Josephine's moment as Ms. Norbury in "Do This Thing" were vocal high points. Karen's "Sexy" is ironic fun.

As you'd expect from a high school story, the costumes carry a lot of weight — sometimes literally. Aside from providing teen fashion inspo (the production discourages children under 10 from attending), there's lingerie (see "Sexy," above) and lions (both literal and mascot), with some surprisingly quick changes among them. The sets are flashy and slick, shifting instantly mid-song from shopping mall to savanna to classroom to bedroom.

Not everything about "Mean Girls" is totally fetch, but there's still plenty to enjoy.

"Mean Girls"

Through Nov. 21; Paramount Theatre, 911 Pine St., Seattle;  
\$65-\$115; 206-682-1414, [stgpresents.org](http://stgpresents.org)

Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer;  
[gemmadeealexander.com](http://gemmadeealexander.com).