

# Stage

## STAGEBEAT



While the effort behind *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* is plain to see, the Delray Beach Playhouse's production just can't breathe life into this boring 1964 musical about a boring man. Walter is a husband and father taking stock of his life on his 40th birthday. Unsatisfied as a company man and weary of his henpecking wife, Agnes, he engages in frequent daydreams — a type of self-medication — that are all too unimaginative. He's an astronaut. He's a surgeon. He's a playboy in a Parisian café. He sticks it to his boss. These Everyman fantasies simply disappoint. Here we are inside Walter Mitty's head, and all we learn is that he wants to be somewhere else. What's more interesting is watching the production cleverly switch from reality to Mitty's daydreams and back. The sets and costumes are vibrant, the 23-member cast is in lockstep, and the lighting and movement on stage is well-directed. But with a script that is only sometimes humorous, the solid production is merely icing on a stale cake. And no, the flawed narrative isn't rescued by the songs. The score, rife with percussion, drifts into droning repetition. Most of the singing is flat, with some subpar standouts. Mitty's womanizing college roommate, Fred Gorman (Floyd Nash), sings the best number, "Hello, I Love You, Goodbye," with flare. Also strong is "Aggie," sung by Agnes Witty (Karen Whaley). Whaley provides the best acting as Mitty's shrill mate, elevating every scene she's in. And Tiara Tragas, a Citrus Cove Elementary School student who plays Mitty's daughter, handled opening night with aplomb. All that might satisfy devout fans of musicals. The rest of us, however, need something more revealing, such as: Why has Mitty reached this low point? We need only look as far as Willy Loman to find a listless main character that we care about. Characters, like people, have a right to be boring. But boring theater? Nobody cares about that. (Through July 10 at the Delray Beach Playhouse, 950 NW Ninth St., Delray Beach. Call 561-272-1281.) — **Jason Cottrell**