

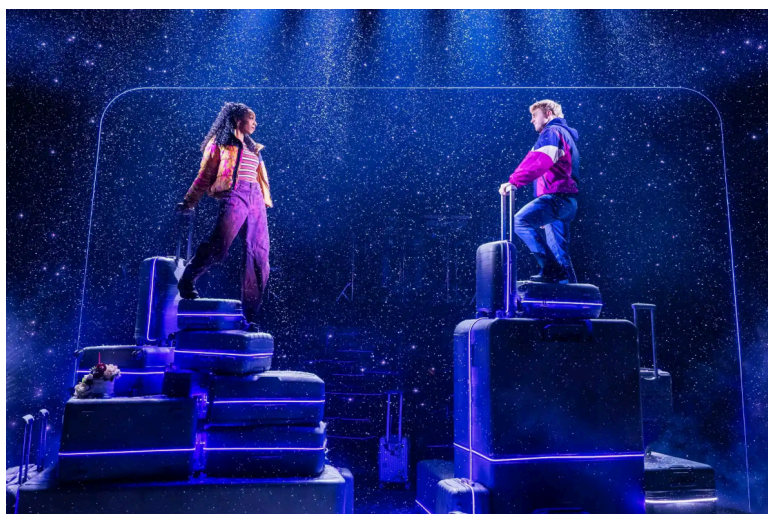
Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York) review: A delightful rom-com musical comes to Broadway

By Dalton Ross

SPOILER ALERT! There's not a lot of cake carrying going on in *Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)*. A cake is certainly carried, and something dramatic happens at a critical juncture with said cake, but the new British import musical opening tonight at the Longacre Theater on Broadway is not to be mistaken for the *Broad Street Challenge* with a confectionery twist.



Title confusion aside, what you actually get with *Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)* is an absolutely charming two-hander about seemingly opposites from opposite sides of the pond finding common ground and connection.



Because this is a romantic comedy (written delightfully by Jim Barne and Kit Buchan with direction by Tim Jackson), the action and attraction begin with the two characters literally bumping into each other, and where else but at an airport. Robin (Christiani Pitts) is there to pick up Dougal (Sam Tutty), the son of her sister's soon-to-be husband, arriving from England for the wedding with extra pep in his step to meet his father for the very first time.

Dougal is all wide-eyed optimism, the most enchanted tourist ever, who can't believe he has landed in the greatest city in the world! Of course, it's a heavily romanticized version of the city the movie buff only knows from films like *Home Alone 2* and *Ghostbusters* — a version he celebrates in the absolutely infectious opening number "New York." (Seriously, it's going to be stuck in your head for days. You've been warned.)

Tutty is an absolute star in the role, displaying boisterous enthusiasm as well as a tender naivete that hints at the inevitable act two disappointment to come. The actor's flawless comedic timing and delivery drive the bulk of the show's many laughs. He makes Dougal irresistible, and the character's unwavering zeal is countered well by the world-weary New Yorker in Robin, whose initial reaction to Dougal's eager beaver nature is eye-rolling annoyance, even if she finds herself being drawn in nevertheless.

Yet, Robin is more than a mere foil. We quickly learn that she has her own demons and awkward connection to the upcoming wedding that will not allow her to simply "be happy," as carefree and clueless Dougal suggests. While Tutty's Dougal is all humor and heart, Pitts' Robin gives the show its soul.

As for the stage itself, the design (also by Gilmour) consists of two towers of silver painted luggage of various sizes on a turntable. It's not the most visually exciting backdrop, but the suitcases do prove inventive, opening at various points to reveal props, a closet, a bed, a vanity, and even a noodle shop. The turntable also leads to lots of dramatic walking in place. Not highly original, but effective enough.



The same could probably be said of the entire romantic comedy genre, but when you have the right stars and the right songs, it doesn't really matter. If it works, it works. And *Two Strangers (Carry a Cake Across New York)* definitely works. Grade: B+