

The Grand Avenue Denizen's Coffee Shop: The Modern Cafe Latte Has More Than A Latte To Boast

BY REBECCA BEASLEY

WHEN PEOPLE RECOMMEND the perfect coffee spot, they usually describe a tiny neighborhood cafe with the coziest of vibes. Cafe Latte is a great place to get coffee, but I would describe it as neither tiny nor cozy. Before walking in, you can tell this is an affluent, large business. It is in the same stretch of Grand Avenue as Anthropologie and the Pottery Barn, and it claims two floors of one building. Cafe Latte is most known for its cakes and desserts, but they also serve entrees like soup, salad, and pizza.

Upon first entry, Cafe Latte is intimidating and confusing. There are other businesses in the same stretch of the building, and there are two counters at which customers can order. The first counter is the lunch or entree counter. This line was almost out the door by the time I arrived. The other counter was rather hidden, and it was for to-go orders and cakes. I was a tad overwhelmed, and I wasn't sure where I was supposed to order if I just wanted coffee.

A regular who had been in line with me recommended that I go to the second counter, which had no line at all. I went up to that counter and was able to order a salted caramel latte and an English currant scone "for here."

The latte was wonderful—a perfect mixture of coffee and caramel, where neither outshined the other. I was grateful to find that the latte was not hot enough to burn my tongue, which is a pet peeve of mine when ordering hot coffee. It also came in a glass cup, which was surprising considering the temperature of the latte, but it upheld the aesthetics of the business.

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As for the scone, the flavor was wonderful but the texture was all wrong. Scone lovers and bakers will understand that the texture of a scone is what makes it a scone. They should be tender and have a slightly flakey crumb that falls apart easily. The scone I had at Cafe Latte had a hard crust as if it had been over-baked. The crumb was rather muffin-like, which is not what I look for in a scone. I would guess that the butter in the dough was too warm when the scones

went into the oven, or it was overmixed. I did, however, enjoy the coarse sugar topping and the even distribution of currants. The currants were mixed into the dough properly, so they did not all sink to the bottom of the scone as a blob of fruit.

While I sat down with my friend to drink our lattes and scone, I noticed Cafe Latte's peculiar atmosphere. It felt very modern, due to the high ceilings and more minimalist furniture. There were some canvas paintings on the walls, like in most coffee shops, but they did not boast the names of local artists, as one would expect. Because of the lunch rush, it was rather busy and crowded, and it didn't feel like a college student's study dream.

Nevertheless, I would recommend this particular spot. Not specifically for coffee, but for their numerous options in lunches and desserts. This is no homely spot to have a deep, one-on-one conversation, but it wouldn't be a bad place to get lunch and hang out with a group of friends.

The Show Must Go On! College Students Share the Trials and Tribulations of Performing Arts During the Pandemic

BY KYLE BAKER

THERE IS AN OLD SAYING that performers should be ready for anything. Performers need to be masters of adapting to the audience's responses. However, one adaptation that never crept into a performer's mind was a show without an audience. It sounds almost sacrilegious to have a production without an audience. While it sounds like a horrible nightmare, the pandemic transformed that hypothetical into a reality.

It is no secret that the backbone of the performing arts is the audience; for most, getting to perform in front of an audience is the payoff for all of their hard work. To better explain the importance an audience has, think of a bright, cherry red sports car. Regardless of how that car was assembled or how appealing it looks, without a place to drive it, it loses its purpose. The audience is the road. They provide the metaphorical road for the performers to show off their skills. In many ways, the Coronavirus seemingly took away the performing arts' purpose.

While the issues surrounding the pandemic are plentiful, there are silver linings. Even though many doors were figuratively and literally shut, others opened. A way

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that performers adapted was live streaming. Live streaming gives a performer's production a chance to reach places they never even thought possible.

Jennette Schmitt, a junior at the University of Minnesota Duluth, is a member of one of the school's vocal ensembles. While she, like the vast majority, is eagerly waiting for life to return to normal, she

did mention some good has come out of these troubling times. On the topic of reaching more people through their pandemic live streams, she shared that "We had more people seeing us sing than we thought possible. We had more people tune in than we had seats in our auditorium... We even had people from the Philippines watching us."

On the bright side of things, many theatres and concert halls are slowly starting to return to having live audiences. However, this comes with a caveat, wearing face-masks. In theatre, wearing a facemask takes away an actor's most valuable asset: their face. Facial expressions play a prominent role in the world of theatre.

Lindsey Bahr, a senior at Concordia University St. Paul, who is an avid performer in campus productions, weighed in on the issue. In reference to the complications of wearing a mask, she stated, "You have a third dimension now, instead of just 'where's my body and what am I saying?' You now have to think about adjusting your mask and your annunciation." With an excess of variables, it becomes easier to miss a line or a cue. Thankfully, it appears masks are becoming a fleeting issue for performers.

In what has been a dark and uncertain time, self-expression is even more vital than ever. Performing arts students will finally get their respective outlets back as the world attempts to move closer to pre-pandemic times. While it remains uncertain when that may happen, every step forward is a step in the right direction.