

## Nine

The new musical of the holiday season, “Nine,” is, for me, mostly a bust, like recent Hollywood efforts such as “Sweeney Todd,” “The Producers,” “Dreamgirls,” and “Rent” whose movie versions have hardly replicated their theatrical successes. The film is based on a 1982 Broadway show which is itself based on Federico Fellini’s movie “8½;” it traces the agonies and doubts of an Italian film director, Guido Contini (Daniel Day Lewis), struggling to fashion his latest cinematic opus, and his interactions with the varied women in his life.

The Fellini film (released in 1963) is an absolute classic, one that may incite emulation but which is probably (in my view) also unique, not subject to duplication. Still, the Felliniesque tinges of “Nine” are, to this film fan, the best parts of the movie, even though they pale in comparison to the original. As a production, it has some pizzazz and style—the Italian locations are nice--but, as a musical, it simply droops.

The numbers, as staged by director Rob Marshall (who also made “Chicago”) are unoriginal and often crass (like the coarse, stereotypical “Be Italian” belted out by Fergie). The choreography throughout is facile and routine. Movement in the film is best defined by the ill-used Penelope Cruz (playing the Great Man’s mistress) who, in her big number “A Call from the Vatican,” mainly strikes poses in lingerie rather than dances. All of the female stars—there are seven—get a song (Marion Cotillard, playing Guido’s long-suffering wife, gets two) but none of them is memorable.

Maybe if you like coarse, brash musicals, “Nine” will suffice; but the more you admire the original “8½,” the less “Nine” delivers.

*(Rated “PG-13” for mild sexual content, “Nine” runs 112 minutes.)*

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