

## The Fantasticks

AT COTTAGE THEATRE THROUGH DEC. 16

Unlike a lot of musical theater, *The Fantasticks* doesn't offer a lot of razzle-dazzle.

Instead, it's a small-cast, understated masterpiece, with an enormous beating heart and acute perception of the human condition. Written by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, it opened in 1960 and closed in '92 after more than 17,000 performances.

In the play, two fathers, Bellamy and Hucklebee, concoct a plot to get their son and daughter together. The best way to get your children to do anything, they reason, is to tell them not to. In Cottage Theatre's production, the dads are played with fraternal energy by Mark Allen and Larry Brown.

Naturally, the plotting patriarchs build a wall dividing their gardens in order to keep their children, Luisa and Matt, apart. Which, of course, only makes the budding romance blossom. Luisa, played by Ashlee Winkler, is 16 and drunk on adolescence. Matt, played by Thomas Guastavino, is 20 and slightly more worldly wise. He's been to college and believes he knows what his heart wants. And what his heart wants is Luisa.

To bring their ruse to conclusion, Bellamy and Hucklebee hire a band of actors, led by El Gallo, played with swashbuckling aplomb by Sam Anderson. The rogues are to stage an abduction of Luisa. With Matt saving the day, Bellamy and Hucklebee can call off the charade, appear to make amends, and everyone will live happily ever after.

Of course, it doesn't quite all go according to plan.

CT's entire cast is excellent. The singing is strong, and the stripped-down, piano-based score is a veritable Lazy Susan of memorable melodies. Winkler and Guastavino are radiant. And in small roles as part of El Gallo's troupe of thespian skallywags, Henry and Mortimer, played by Dale Flynn and Keith Kessler, nearly steal the show. The

production is ably directed by Kory Weimer.

*The Fantasticks* is a play about make-believe and falling in love with love. It's also about parenthood, growing up and the painful beauty of youth.

El Gallo sings in one of the play's best-known pieces, "Try to remember when life was so tender that/ Love was an ember about to billow/ Try to remember and if you remember then follow."

You will follow, and you won't be sorry you did. — *Will Kennedy*



THE LONG CHRISTMAS DINNER AT VERY LITTLE THEATRE  
(PHOTO COURTESY VLT)

## The Long Christmas Dinner

AT VERY LITTLE THEATRE THROUGH DEC. 16

I have a lot of experience hearing and singing Christmas carols. I can — kind of — recite the German lyrics of "Silent Night" as a party trick, usually to an audience that is not nearly as impressed with my talent as I had hoped.

## JORDAN SCHNITZER MUSEUM OF ART

### FAMILY DAY

BRINGING THE OUTDOORS INSIDE

Día de la Familia | Trayendo el aire libre al interior

Saturday  
December 8  
12-3 p.m.



### ART ACTIVITIES

12 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Bottle Cap Bugs with MECCA

Nature Calligraphy with the UO  
Confucius Institute

Watercolor Landscapes

Terrarium Biomes

Art Making on Artie the Art Bus from  
Imagination International Inc.

### PERFORMANCES

12:30 p.m.

Story Time with Springfield Public  
Library

1 p.m.

Dragon Puppet Theatre

1:30 p.m.

Museum Highlights Tour

2 p.m.

Upstart Crow Performance

Made possible by the supporters of Transforming Lives: The JSMA at 85 Gala.

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