

We love them, they're perfect — don't change

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Don't Change"

Review

BY BURNEY GARELICK

And that rub has never been so thoroughly tackled and tickled than in the musical comedy at Class Act Theatre (CAT) June 16-18 and June 23-25.

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change is a mouthful that bursts with musical hilarity as it reprises dating and mating moments everyone's life. With book and lyrics by Joe DePietro and music by Jimmy Roberts, this is the second-longest Off Broadway show, opening in 1996 and closing in 2008.

It clearly resonates with audiences, whether it plays New York City or Florence, Ore.

It's a show full of singing, more singing than speaking. But don't worry; it's not opera. It's sketch comedy-short scenes about dating practices, circling the quarry, punctuated by a song. The women lament "Single Man Drought" and the men assert their masculinity with "Why? Cause I'm a Guy."

There's also the guy who lets his date choose a movie that turns out to be a sentimental chick flick and he surprises himself and her by weeping copiously.

The first act involves dating and mating. The second act involves marriage, raising children, rediscovering that imperfect soul mate, growing old together and apart. There's the "Baby Song" filled with baby talk; "The Marriage Tango" in which mom and dad try to find a moment alone; and the hilarious "On the Highway of Love," the bruising family car trip that offers anything but love.

I Love You, You're Perfect,

Now Change is the first production in CAT's second season, and it's a perfectly delightful opener. But the best part is the acting ensemble — five local actors with disparate personalities who perform together like a well-oiled machine in which every part moves in sync and in time for a flawless two hours including intermission.

The five actors each play many parts and wear many costumes. Flanked by a black wall with black curtains for entrances and exits and a bare stage, the actors must not only sing and speak, they must set the scenes with a couple of tables and chairs, sometimes in darkness between scenes. It's a challenging and exacting choreography, and they pull it off with aplomb.

The remarkable actors should be named simultaneously since listing them separately implies one is more excellent than another. They are all MVPs, Most Valuable Players, to use a guy sports

term women pretend to understand.

So, in the order listed in the show program, this exceptional quintet includes: Maree Beers, Melanie Heard, Wendy Krause, Jacob Ternyik and Jake Molano.

The singing actors are supported with live music provided by Pat Sapp at the keyboard. In Sapp's very capable hands, the music sparkles and swings and never overwhelms the bright lyrics. Show director David Lauria, co-owner of CAT, has done a terrific job managing the frantic and frenetic show, complemented by his production team. But it is the acting ensemble that strikes gold.

Beers, an impeccable vocalist, proves adept at comedy, especially in the following scenes: *The Lasagna Incident*, *Satisfaction Guaranteed* about the law firm with partners Masters and Johnson, and in *Funerals are for Dating*, a lovely sketch.

Heard, artistic director and founder of CROW (Children's Repertory of Oregon Workshops), takes center stage to deliver all the skill, balance, grace and timing she continues to teach the CROW kids.

Besides the poignant song "I Will Be Loved Tonight," and the lament, "Always A Bridesmaid," she is a fantastic comic, turning up as crazy characters, she is laugh-out-loud funny.

Krause returns to the Florence stage where in the past decades she played Daisy Mae in *Li'l Abner* and Marilyn Monroe in *Sugar* (the musical version of *Some Like It Hot*).

In *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, she is still hot, playing a variety of characters, singing "He Called Me" in the lovesick sketch and playing the marriage-minded mom in the parents sketch that turns out not to be as engaging as she and hubby expected.

Ternyik is no stranger to the Florence stage, having honed his craft in productions by the Last Resort Players and CROW, most recently as moonstruck Uncle Fester in *The Addams Family*. In *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, his elegant mellifluous voice speaks to the heart, particularly in the poignant "Should I Be Less in Love with You?"

Molano is truly a wonder, a natural actor and a marvelous singer. His first stage venture was Gomez in *The Addams Family*.

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change is only his second show. When he does *A Stud & A Babe* with Heard, about two nerdy characters who want to be hot, he becomes the Superman on his shirt. When he plays the dotting dad and sings "The Baby Song," he is absolutely charming.

The five actors are inextricably linked in this show, singing duos, trios, quartets and quintets and bantering in one guise or another. Together they create an extraordinarily funny show that's framed by angels.

If we could, we'd crown those actors with halos.

We love them, they're perfect, don't change a hair during the two-weekend run.

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