

LOOKING FOR LOVE

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Coast Weekend

“Living on Love,” the Coaster Theatre Playhouse’s spring production, is not a musical, but music is woven throughout the characters’ histories, onstage antics and poignant relationships.

“There is a lot of music in it, but in weird kinds of ways,” director Patrick Lathrop said.

The play, written by Joe DiPietro and running through April 13 at the Coaster Theatre, follows two celebrated musical artists who are past middle age and nearing the end of their illustrious careers: Raquel De Angelis, the diva, as a famous opera singer and her husband, Vito De Angelis, the maestro, as an acclaimed orchestra conductor.

Grasping for new fame amid their declining careers, they each hire a young ghostwriter to assist in drafting their autobiographies. Relationships develop in unexpected ways and comedy ensues at the couple’s 1957 Manhattan penthouse under the watchful eyes of the all-knowing servants, Eric and Bruce.

The show is like a sitcom — silly and over-the-top, Lathrop said.

“It’s ‘The Lucy Show,’” he said. The humor abounds in the unique characters, their relationships and their realization at the end that “everything they’ve been seeing is not as it really is.”

An outrageous duo

Cathey Ryan’s task has been finding her inner diva to portray Raquel in a way that makes her likable, albeit clueless and somewhat shortsighted.

“Raquel lives in an opera 24/7/365,” Ryan said. “She says it at one point, that ‘opera revels in the great-



Robert Samson, played by Bennett Hunter, shares a kiss with assistant junior editor Iris Peabody, played by Emilee Andrade, in the play ‘Living on Love.’



Iris Peabody, played by Emilee Andrade, is tasked with ghostwriting the autobiography of Maestro Vito De Angeles, played by Frank Jagodnik, amid his persistent sexual advances.



Young ghostwriter Robert Samson attempts for weeks to write an autobiography of Maestro Vito De Angeles, who is constantly late and embellishing stories of his love life.

est of love and sorrow with heart-stopping beauty.’ She’s almost always ‘on.’”

Yet, Ryan added, Raquel is not an intentional diva or petty and cruel. She does not create drama, but rather finds the drama in any given situation.

“She’s not aware of the corner if she’s on the sidewalk, but when she gets to the corner, then the corner is the world,” she said.

Frank Jagodnik is her equally dramatic counterpart, Vito, whom Jagodnik

described as “probably one of the most outrageous characters I’ve ever played here.” The passionate, narcissistic Italian, who often refers to himself in the third-person, has a short temper but also can be tender and well-meaning.

The old and the new

Rehearsing “Living on Love” has been a growing experience for several of the actors. While Jagodnik perfected his Italian accent and became comfortable with large hand gestures, Ryan

became acquainted with opera and learned to sing a few bars. Her husband, Thomas Ryan, who portrays Eric, even started playing the piano.

Meanwhile, Emilee Andrade has discovered much of herself in Iris Peabody, the other ghostwriter who challenges the societal norms of the 1950s by pursuing a career over marriage.

“She is her own woman, wants to do her own thing, build her own career,” Andrade said.

When she meets Robert

Samson — Raquel’s ghostwriter, played by Bennett Hunter — she discovers the two are not mutually exclusive, that she can have both a relationship and a career. Andrade also has enjoyed the 1950 trends, references and nostalgia artfully integrated into the show.

“It’s neat to have loved that era and to finally actually get to play in that era,” she said.

While primarily a romantic comedy, the show has a touching and relatable ele-

ment as Vito and Raquel deal with arriving at the tail-end of their fame-studded careers. Not only are they forced to grapple with their own identities in this later stage of life but are reminded of why they fell in love in the first place.

“It’s really sweet,” Lathrop said. “It’s not going to change anybody’s life. It doesn’t make a huge pointed social statement, or political statement, or anything at all. It’s just a really sweet, lovely romantic comedy.”

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