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Summer serenade

Relationship romp enjoys long run at Noble Fool

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By Randall G. Mielke Special to the beacon news

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For a show to be successful, audience members must identify with its characters. In *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change*, being presented by the Noble Fool Theatricals at the Pheasant Run Resort & Spa in St. Charles, four performers portray more than 60 roles in a collection of vignettes and songs that cover a wide range of male/female relationships. Somewhere during the course of the evening's entertainment, people find themselves or someone they know in these characters and laugh heartily in appreciation and recognition. The musical is highly entertaining.

This clever and appealing show, with book and lyrics by Joe DiPietro and music by Jimmy Roberts, progresses through the various trials and tribulations of romance over the course of one's life. (First-date scenes, for example, come before scenes dealing with marriage). The four-person cast of Charissa Armon, Karl Hamilton, Amy Olsen and John Sanders were excellent, and the skillful direction by Tom Mullen kept the pace of the show at a swift and steady level.

At times it was hard to believe these were the same actors in the different scenes. In the song *A Stud and A Babe* a nerdy man (Sanders) and a dorky woman (Armon) dream about how they would act differently if they were more of a stud and more of a babe. The duo made a perfect transition to different characters and back again within the same song. The next number found Hamilton and Sanders singing about the things they do as guys and why they do them in *Why? Cause I'm a Guy*, a very funny number. But in this number there is no trace of the characters from the prior song. Later in the show Hamilton and Armon portray parents who criticize their son (Sanders) and possible future daughter-in-law (Olsen) for not settling down in *Hey There, Single Gal/Guy*. Again, the cast took on the new characters with great ease.

The bulk of the show consists of musical numbers, but an occasional scene reminiscent of *Saturday Night Live* did appear. One such scene in the first act had Sanders and Armon in bed and Hamilton as a pitch man for a law firm ensuring that each partner is satisfied or "we get you money."

Probably the best number in the show came midway through the second act. On the *Highway of Love* featured Hamilton and Armon as a bickering husband and wife who hop into their car with their kids (Sanders and Olsen) and travel to a party. Four, brightly-colored blue desk chairs on rollers functioned as the car and the four performers were all over the stage while they sang the song and acted out the scene. Either director Mullen or choreographer Stacey Flaster (or both) should be commended for a very creative and delightfully-entertaining number.

The show also had its touching moments. In *I Can Live With That* in the second act, Hamilton and Olsen portray an older male and an older female who meet in a funeral home and sing about their lives, their departed loved ones and where they go from this point forward. It was a poignant and poetic number.

Technically, the show was flawless. Effective mood lighting altered the scenes and a stage floor that moved set pieces on and off was slick and efficient.

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change premiered in 1996 at New York City's Westside Theatre, where it now is in its 12th year. It is one of Off-Broadway's longest-running musicals and, over the years, additional productions of the show have been mounted in more than 400 cities worldwide.

In a press release, Noble Fool Theatricals Artistic Director John Gawlik was quoted as saying the show "...is hip, modern, fun - and a great way to spend an evening."

I wholeheartedly agree.

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