

Noble Fool's new musical comedy just 'Perfect' pheasant run



By Submission

Charissa Armon and Karl Hamilton play the dating game in "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change."

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By Renee Tomell
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I love you, you're perfect — DON'T change, pleads this reviewer of the musical comedy now playing at Pheasant Run Resort, presented by Noble Fool Theatricals. "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" is funny, smart, full of heart and boasts a superb cast.

The four actors — Charissa Armon, Karl Hamilton, Amy Olsen and John Sanders — switch into new characters with each musical vignette exposing different facets of relationships, from dating to marriage and parenting. On opening night, the clever lyrics were sharply delivered by the vocalists, whose voices intertwine beautifully thanks to deft casting by director Tom Mullen. Beyond selecting powerful voices, he also picked artists with impressive acting skills. The show tracks characters ranging from twentysomethings to an elderly widow and widower who meet at a wake and discover they still have some life and possibilities left.

Noble Fool was in touch with the show's playwright-lyricist, Joe DiPietro, for permission to update elements, said Artistic Director John Gawlik of Chicago, a Wheaton native. For the first time in the hit show's history, percussion substitutes for violin and changes the tenor of the music.

The revue's content is definitely adult and includes some off-color language. And while it's not appropriate for children, the stories also might not appeal to teens because they lack the life experiences this show reflects back at the audience so keenly.

The production's attractive staging by Dan Conley places musical director and pianist Ken Jones and percussionist Paul Bauer on a raised platform center stage, partially obscured from view behind a screen used for visual effects. Inventive choreography by Stacey Flaster fuels the fluid action.

"The show has so many more levels to play than I thought," Sanders said at the cast party opening night, adding that whenever the actors came too close to caricature during rehearsal, the director pulled them back. "He put us on solid footing in the real world. Play it for real. Don't try to get the laugh."

The fast costume changes between vignettes are an added challenge.

"It's as much of a dance backstage, if not more," Sanders said, as the four actors bring 60 characters into being.

He said the performers are having a ball working on the show and actually carpool to the theater from Chicago together.

"It's fun to be somebody different every three or four minutes," said Armon, who enjoyed anticipating where the laughs

would be generated along gender lines.

There's plenty to laugh about for both sexes — from dates gone hysterically wrong to romance and the married couple.

"The moments are written so sweetly and true to the heart," Armon said.

The show is an effervescent treat from start to finish. Don't miss the chance for a "perfect" night out.

If you go

What: Off-Broadway's longest-running musical comedy revue, "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," is presented by Noble Fool Theatricals. The show by Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Rogers is recommended for mature audiences only.

When: It Runs Now through Saturday, July 19. Show times are 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday; 5 and 8:30 p.m. Saturday; and 2 p.m. Sunday. Added matinees start at 2 p.m. Thursdays, May 15 and 29.

Where: Pheasant Run Resort is at 4051 E. Main St. (Route 64), St. Charles.

Tickets: Call the box office at (630) 584-6342 or visit www.ticketmaster.com. Single tickets cost \$27 for Thursday and Friday shows, and \$38 for Saturday and Sunday. Dinner-show packages cost \$49 and \$59, respectively. Season subscriptions start at \$20 for show-only tickets (dinner can be added for \$27). Visit www.noblefool.org for details on shows, including "Late Nite Catechism" playing through May in the resort's studio theater, with performances at 6 p.m. Saturday and 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

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