

Stage Right offers cool musical to fend off July heat

What could be nicer than a red, dripping slice of cold watermelon on a hot day?

Not much, but the STAGE RIGHT OF TEXAS production, "The Music Man," in downtown Conroe's cool Crighton Theatre, might come close when it opens July 15.

But hardly any show happens without some drama, including this one.

The day after songbird GINNY MENDEZ won the female lead of Marian (the librarian), she discovered that business necessitated her being out of town for opening weekend. What's a girl to do except back out of the singing role?

But for play director MANNY MENDEZ, with 30 years of local experience, it was no trauma.

He chose another talented singer, JENNY HOOFNAGLE, to alternate the role with Ginny.

Consequently, Jenny Hoofnagle will appear as Marian on opening weekend, July 15 & 16, while Ginny Mendez appears during the subsequent weekend shows through July 31.

A nice arrangement for everybody, but that also means some of us have to go twice to see both Marian's.

Manny also double cast other roles.

"The young boys who auditioned for Winthrop, Marian's little brother with the famous speech impediment, were so good that I couldn't choose one over the other, so I chose both," Manny said.

The two are NOAH SMITH and IAN MONTEZ, who appear in alternate performances.

There also are two Zanetas: SACHI TANAKA, and GABRIELLE SCARCLIFF. Ian's mother MELODY MONTEZ plays Mrs. Paroo, Marian's mother, who worries that her daughter may



PEGG MILLER

Performing Arts Columnist

become an old maid.

"The cast will be very familiar to patrons who saw 'Lend Me a Tenor,'" said one of SR's founders CAROLYN CORSANO WONG. "Mike Anderson and Ginny Mendez acted opposite each other in that comedy."

The two also acted in lead roles for "White Christmas" at PLAYHOUSE 1960 last year.

MIKE ANDERSON plays Professor Harold Hill, the charming confidence man who rides a train into River City, Iowa, intent on bilking residents into buying band instruments for their young boys, even though he has no knowledge whatsoever of music. Hill's method of operation that worked in other small townships, is to ride out of town fast with the money before the people discover his deception.

But it doesn't work that way this time. Harold Hill just happens to fall in love with Marian, and she with him, foiling her discovery and plan to unmask his scheme; the big brass horns arrive, making residents deaf to the horrid cacophony and blind to the ragtag uniforms; the concerned parents revel in what Professor Harold Hill has done for the town's youth; Mrs. Paroo's fears about her daughter's marital status are allayed, and seemingly, Professor Hill straightens up his nefarious behavior, especially after the towns people find out about his intended motives.

It's feel good all around,

and audiences leave humming some of the best songs like "Goodnight, My Someone," "Till There Was You," "Trouble right here in River City," and the beloved finale, "76 Trombones."

CAROLYN CORSANO WONG, one of SR's founders, said she finally got her whole family involved in a stage production, after all her own stage appearances.

"My husband STEVE WONG will be in the chorus. He has a beautiful voice and we were short of men, so we dragged him out of the light booth for this show. Our son MICHAEL WONG is going to run lights."

The only family member missing is HARLEY, THE WONDER DOG, and I wouldn't be surprised to find him on stage in the crowd scenes. After all, every family in the small towns of yesteryear owned a mutt or two. And no, I don't mean to imply that Harley is a mutt. He's just a doggone good actor of the canine persuasion.

Carolyn plays the mayor's wife Eulalia Shinn, with HAROLD WOOD, of Daddy Warbucks fame, portraying the showy mayor of River City.

Also appearing is Carolyn Wong's "best girl friend and 'sister,'" LEONA HOEGSBERG, with whom Carolyn played sisters in "Arsenic and Old Lace," years ago at Ace Theater.

This musical is said to be partly biographical of playwright Meredith Willson, based on his experiences growing up in Iowa.

If you can't wait for opening night, you can get a sneak peek at THE SOUTH MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOURTH OF JULY PARADE, when Mike Anderson and Ginny Mendez will be singing some of the show tunes at 9 a.m., along with chorus members.



Courtesy photo by WishNik Photography

Mike Anderson and Ginny Mendez star as Harold Hill and Marian in Stage Right's upcoming "Music Man." The show opens July 15 at the Crighton Theatre.

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STAGE RIGHT
presents

Meredith Willson's
The Music Man

July 15 - 31
Fri. & Sat.
at 8 pm
Sunday matinees
July 24 & 31
at 2 pm

Performances at the historic Crighton Theatre
234 N. Main St., Conroe TX
Tickets: www.stage-right.org or 936-441-SHOW