



# 1920's era comedy brings Laughs to Chestnut

By Bob Evans

Chestnut Fine Arts Center



If you are tired of dramas or dark comedies that have a great comic first act before descending into a darker, serious, meaningful message piece, then line up for tickets to The Chestnut Fine Arts Center's newest production, "Radio Gals" that runs through June 24.

The show, featuring a cast of strong local performers, delivers fun and laughs from beginning to end with no serious undertones, whatsoever. Even the villain can't chase the fun from this piece. And it doesn't hurt that the villain is bitten by the show-biz bug when given the chance to perform nationally over the airwaves.

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“Radio Gals” brings home-spun fun from the late 1920 in Arkansas. Because of arthritis, local music teacher, Hazel Hunt retired, and, upon her retirement received a 500 watt radio transmitter which allowed her to spread joy, music, news, comics, astrology, and lots of music from the living room of her home. The broadcast further allowed her to peddle her horehound compound that, basically, cures what ails ya. (If you remember *The Beverly Hillbillies*, Granny’s rheumatiz’ medicine did the same.)

For this cast, director Brad Zimmerman called on a cast comprised of Chestnut veterans to deliver the laughs. The ensemble piece divides up the comedy giving all the ‘gals’ time in the spotlight. These flappers were: Beth Benedict Borders, Lori Blalock, Jeannette Bonjour, Vicky DeLaughder, Pam Haskin, and Lecia Watson. Their singing arch-enemy was portrayed by T. Eric Morris, who gets a chance to let loose with his strong tenor voice and his facial gymnastics.

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The cast lifts this fun comedy to the delight of the audience. The strong chemistry among them just shows with each song and dance in the show. The premise is silly. The songs are silly. The costumes are silly, and the overall result is a fun 2-hour show with lots of hearty laughter.

You see, Hazel Hunt, a trendsetter in her own right, surfs the airwaves with her radio frequency and changes signals regularly. Because of her wave-hopping, WGAL might be picked up on anyone's radio near or far—depending on the frequency. She surfing the airwaves long before the Internet was even a passing thought. The problem, though, it's illegal to do that. So, the federal government sends an investigator to check her records of broadcasts. While there, he sees Hazel change her bandwidth when her signal weakens. Of course, the investigator plans to report his discovery to J. Edgar Hoover. Such a report to J. Edgar would most certainly cause Hazel to lose her license and forever silence her HazelNut singers.

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But it's not just Hazel that stands in his way. There's a bevy of other ladies to deal with, each part of the local singing group, The Hazel Nuts. And the Hazel Nuts sing, dance, perform to keep the local (and far distant) listeners entertained. Hazel and The Hazel Nuts provide enough song and dance to keep their listeners well entertains as well as the audience at The Chestnut. The off-beat, comedic songs never made the Billboard Top 40, and you will understand why as you hear them. The songs are all funny and the performances are all charming.



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The behind the scenes production staff includes: Brad Zimmerman, producer/director/piano; Terri Babbitt, stage manager; Val Fagan, spotlight/usher; Debbie Payne, set designer; Lenora Remmert, keyboard; Christina Brewer, choreography; Diane Mackey, house manager. The book, music and

lyrics are by Mike Craver and Mark Hardwick.

“Radio Gals” continues through June 24 at the Chestnut Fine Arts Center in Olathe, Kansas. Tickets are available at 913.764.2121. More information, performance dates and times can be found at [The Chestnut Fine Arts website](http://www.chestnutfinearts.com).  
www.chestnutfinearts.com

Tags: “Radio Gals”, Chestnut Fine Arts Center, Olathe Kansas, Kansas City Theater, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment, Kansas City Comedy



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