



Austen classic draws robust OCTA crowd

By Bob Evans

Olathe Civic Theatre Associa



Olathe Civic Theatre Association just ended a successful run of the Jane Austen classic, “Sense and Sensibility,” an early 1800s comedy about the British and their fixation on the idea to “marry well.”

Austen’s book focuses on the Dashwood family after the death of their father. At that time and according to European sentiment, the rightful heir to all the family possessions and money transferred to the eldest male heir. That being the case, the widow and three daughters find themselves nearly destitute and at the mercy of others. Their whole focus becomes to find a rich man and marry while still holding on to their vitrue.

Like Austen’s other major works, this is a class struggle against a patriarchal society. Her most famous work, *Pride and Prejudice* concerns a father burdened with five daughters and his need to find them all suitable husbands. Similarly, *Sense*

and Sensibility revolves around women in the early 1800s. For the play, "Sense and Sensibility" lops major parts of the novel, condenses it, but still tells the story of class and society struggles.

To keep this play focused, director Jessica Franz assembled a strongly dominant female cast whose understanding of the material and professional delivery of the lines moved the story with speedy accuracy. The humor of the play lies in the nuances, gestures, and characterization of the female characters. The men are mostly just for window dressing and plot devices.

While the women dominate the story line, the men are the ones who make the story interesting. They represent the British society and the stereotypes of the period. And what can be more sporting than to throw jabs at the stereotypes? The script does not miss in exposing the true nature of the beasts.

The casting was super. Meghann Deveroux and Erika Crane Ricketts were flawless as the two Dashwood sisters. Tracy Fox, Karla M. Fennick, Amy Reinhardt, and Victoria Hoffman were priceless in their characterizations. As for the men, they all gave good performances even though their parts were not large. Of special note were Charles Christesson and Kyle Tichenor.

Top to bottom strong cast, great understanding of character, motives, and the comedy within the piece. Bringing the comedy to the forefront and keeping this piece moving is paramount to the success of "Sense and Sensibility." Great production.

The "Sense and Sensibility" cast is: Colonel Brandon – Derrick Freeman, Edward Ferrars – Khalid Johnson, Elinor Dashwood – Erika Crane Ricketts, Ensemble – Amanda Bass, John Willoughby – Kyle Tichenor, Lady Middleton – Jeannie Blau, Lucy Steele – Amy Reinhardt, Marianne Dashwood – Meghann Deveroux, Mr. John Dashwood – Don Leonard, Mrs. Ferrars – Irene Blend, Mrs. Henry

Dashwood – Tracy Fox, Mrs. Jennings – Karla M. Fennick, Mrs. John Dashwood – Victoria Hoffman, Ms. Grey – Lauren Crane, Robert Ferrars – Patrick Peterson, Sir John Middleton – Charles Christesson.

The creative team for “Sense and Sensibility is: Director – Jessica Franz, Stage Manager – DK Evenson, Choreographer – Valerie Martin, Set Designer – Bill Wright, Lighting Designer – Chuck Cline & Camille Lerch, Props Designer – Rita Marks, Costume Designer – Sarah Jeter, Sound Designer – Erin Brown, Dialect Coach – Tamara Kingston.

“Sense and Sensibility” ran for three weekends at Olathe Civic Theatre Association in Olathe, Kansas. Their upcoming Christmas program is now in rehearsals.

Tags: Sense and Sensibility, OCTA, Olathe Civic Theatre Association, Kansas City Theater, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainments