



Leawood Stage serves up slapstick comedy

By Bob Evans



Leawood Stage Company/Ironwoods

Lodge

If you want to laugh, get a ticket to The Leawood Stage Company's current production of the madcap, delightful, and constantly twisting comedy, "The Man Who Came to Dinner," now playing at The Lodge at Ironwoods.

The weather may be bad, but inside, the heat and electricity from the stage alone is enough to warm your innards and make you laugh. LST has selected and produced one of the funniest comedies from the Broadway stage and offers it as this year's Valentine's week production. A brilliant cast in a beautifully constructed set and 1940s costumes will transport the audience to a kinder, simpler time and a situation that slips and slides more off the charts than any current comedy to play the American stages.



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Famous, well-known and well-connected radio personality Sheridan Whiteside slips on an icy step when visiting the home of an Ohio businessman. After the fall, Whiteside becomes the guest from hell as he awaits his injury to heal. Whiteside overtakes the home-owner, his family, his house, his living room, his telephone and then threatens to sue the home-owner for over \$100,000 (and that's a lot of moola in 1940). Whiteside's threats and bad behavior amplify his despicable personality as Whiteside slings insults and offensive comments like a southern restaurant cook slings grits. No one escapes his acerbic, nasty nature. But, only his secretary seems to know how to match his candor by ignoring and moving forward.



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The laughs start with the opening madcap scene and continue for the three-hour comedy (including one 15 minute intermission). "The Man Who Came to Dinner" takes the elements of comedy to the maximum with colorful characters, a twisted plot, and surprise situations to keep the audience engaged

throughout.

“The Man Who Came to Dinner” features a trio of actors who provide the fun and keep the plot twisting and turning. Brian Larios plays the most obnoxious house guest ever. Charlotte Gilman plays the all-to-wise secretary who knows her boss’ every move and pattern. Kim Hentges plays the “other woman” in a non-traditional “other woman” situation. The two women are the perfect rivals. Throw in a third catty woman, Courtney Koval, who adds a whole new dimension to the mixture and the plot changes pace once again. Their characterizations are wonderful and the four will keep the audience engaged.



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Along with that, throw in a featured character, Banjo, who is only slightly mentioned until the final quarter of the play and “The Man Who Came to Dinner” gets even more off track. Jeremy Walter brings a new spark to the show with the entrance of Banjo. He’s like a Harpo Marx with words. Great, strong characterization. But, it’s not just Walter who brings the comedy out. The love interest, in this piece is a newspaper editor played by John Grow. His fresh-faced enthusiasm will make the audience smile with each entrance. The angst between homeowner, Mr. Stanley, played by Rod Chapin and the injured radio personality, Sheridan Whiteside (Larios) is constantly funny.

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Much of the humor of the piece lies in the action on stage, but sadly, some of the humor is lost in the dialogue that would sparkle in the 1940s, but in 2019 many of those references fall flat on those not attending theatre and knowing the headline makers of the 1930s. Some of the references are: Jascha Heifetz, Katherine Cornell, Schiaparelli, Milt Gross, Louella Parsons, William Allen White, Polly Adler, Ciro's, William Russell, and many more.



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Still, those who do not know all the aforementioned names will still enjoy the rapid-fire dialogue and madcap action. The show contains a lot of physical comedy and facial gymnastics as the characters fend off insults and shocking revelations.

Directed by Chad Burris, "The Man Who Came to Dinner" cast is: Brian Larios as Sheridan Whiteside, Charlotte Gilman as Maggie Cutler, Rod Chapin as Mr. Stanley, Deborah Buckner as Mrs. Stanley, Matthew Moore as Richard Stanley, Lindsay Lovejoy as June Stanley, Irene Blend as Harriet Stanley, Katherine Rezabek-Laird as Miss Preen, Kim Hentges as Lorraine Sheldon,

Paul Anderson as John the butler, Petra Allen as Sarah the cook, Valerie Knott as Mrs.

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McCutcheon, Courtney Koval as Mrs. Dexter/Beverly, Chip Buckner as Dr. Bradley, John Grow as Bert Jefferson, Brad Dawdy as Prison Deputy/Baker/Westcott/Deputy, Michael Scahill as Sandy/Convict, Jefferson Harwood as Sandy/Convict, Jeremy Walter as Banjo, Jeremiah Davis as Convict/Expressman/Radio Tech/Deputy, Collin Wyzard as Convict/Expressman/Radio Tech.

The Production staff is: Chad Burriss, director; Toi Hunt, Alexa Edwards, stage managers; Walter Leonard, set design; Mary Williams, costumes; LeAnn Burriss, props; Logan Burriss, props assistant.



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The play runs Feb. 14-17 at The Lodge at Ironwoods. Curtain time is 7:30 for evening performances and 2p.m. for Sunday matinee. The Friday night performance was cancelled due to inclement weather. ***One additional performance has been added:***

Sunday evening, Feb. 17 at 7:30p.m. Tickets for all performances can be purchased through [The Leawood Stage website](#).

Tags: Leawood Stage Company, The Man Who Came to Dinner review, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment