



Marriage, mishaps, chaos make delightful musical

By Bob Evans

Shelly Stewart Banks



A ditzy, nothing-but-fun musical comedy guaranteed to entertain all ages with funny characters, lively music, tap dancing, gangsters, mistaken identities, crazy plot twists, and the traditional musical happy ending—all lead to a spectacular evening enjoyment.

Set in the 1920's or thereabouts, Olathe Civic Theatre Association (OCTA) presents "The Drowsy Chaperone," running through Sept. 23. The 1920s era musical could not be more appropriate for OCTA because one of its founding members, Buddy Rogers, was the heartthrob of the silent era in the early days of motion pictures, and one of the first recipients of the Academy Awards.

Shelly Stewart Banks



The show opens on a dark note. Yes, the stage is actually dark for the opening monologue by The Man in the Chair, creatively presented by Peter Leondedis, as he explains the set up for the mad-cap musical to follow. The Man in the Chair explains how musical records of his favorite Broadway shows continue to entertain him, and, as such, he decides to share his enjoyment with the audience by playing the old vinyl recording, As the record plays, he explains his visions of the musical as it unfolds on center stage to the audience. The Man in the Chair takes the audience on a journey into his mythical image of the musical as it progresses.



Shelly Stewart Banks

As The Man in the Chair relaxes in his chair, the record begins, and the main characters appear on stage in a huge gathering number that introduces the audience to the characters to follow. With the brightly costumed cast in

place, the show's non-stop musical numbers commence. And with each number, new and creative characters burst onto the stage.

With music and lyrics by Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison and a book by Bob Martin and Don McKellar, "The Drowsy Chaperone" brings nothing but fun entertainment to the intimate setting of Olathe Civic Theatre Association (OCTA). After a week of dreary weather, cloudy weather, mist, drizzle, assorted downpours, and gloomy weather, "The Drowsy Chaperone" provided a great respite for those needing laughter and a break.



Shelly Stewart Banks

For this production, Julie Ewing, director found the perfect voices and actors to play the cartoonish characters with panache. Of course, The Man in the Chair narrates the show and provides many funny asides as the musical continues. Peter Leondedis makes this part his own with a different twist to the main character from other local performances. It's difficult to decide whether to focus on him or the main plot unfolding on stage.

As for the cast, all gave over-the-top performances with their zany characters who just kept the fun ongoing throughout. Matthew Hendrickson as Adolfo created the funniest Latin lover for the piece. Hendrickson seemed born to play the part of the scoundrel lover. Paired with him, Kathleen Marx, played the

ever-indulging Chaperone. Their scenes together were charmingly funny. Another strong part came from Aston Botts as Janet Van De Graaff the retired movie star and not-so-blushing bride to be. Her vocals were outstanding. The chemistry between Peggy Mall and Bill Bergman as Mrs. Tottendale and Underling was fun in each of their scenes.

Shelly Stewart Banks



Probably the most entertaining part of the show came from the expert tap dancing of Fisher Stewart who stole the show with his dancing and character. His talent was rewarded by loud cheers during the show and even rewarded more with the curtain call.

Top to bottom, the casting was fantastic. The cast needed a receptive audience to open the show and they got one. The audience loved the show, laughed and applauded, giving the actors the extra energy they needed to create the comedic atmosphere the show possesses.

Shelly Stewart Banks



According to OCTA, “An epic “musical within a comedy”, this brilliantly funny Tony Award-winner is a celebration of the American musical that harkens back to the jazz age of the 1920s. When a loyal fan shares a rare recording of his favorite musical, the characters come to life in an exciting tale of love and delight that leaves audiences breathless. A wedding, gangsters disguised as pastry chefs, and a drunk chaperone are just a few of the ingredients in this delicious farcical treat that is fun for the whole family.”

A talented cast adds more to the fun. Cast: Man in Chair – Peter Leondedis, Robert Martin – Mark Doyle, The Drowsy Chaperone – Kathleen Marx, Janet Van De Graaff – Ashton Botts, Mrs. Tottendale – Peggy Mall, Aldolpho – Matthew Henrickson, Underling – Bill Bergman, George – Fisher Stewart, Kitty – Laura Irwin, Gangster One – Mike Peterson, Gangster Two – Arthur P. Clifford, Mr. Feldzieg – Charles Christesson, Jr., Trix – Ashley Jones, Superintendent – Don Arnott, Ensemble – Mark McNeal, Ensemble – Dana Wardle, Ensemble – Catie Wolff.



Shelly Stewart Banks

Besides the outstanding cast, the technical aspects of the show deserve praise as well. OCTA has installed a new sound system so that most of the actors can now be heard from all parts of the stage. The new sound greatly enhanced the audience's entertainment. The lighting for this show was great as it directed the audience attention to the main center stage to the off-stage area where The Man in the Chair continues to input his thoughts, ideas, and funny commentary. Costumes added the elegance to the production with an array of crazy, bright costumes for each scene and the 1920s gave a creative challenge to designer Rachel Phillips.



Shelly Stewart Banks

“The Drowsy Chaperone” Creative Team is: Director – Julie

Ewing, Music Director – Kevin Bogan, Assistant Music Director – Todd Wiley, Choreographer – Ann McCroskey, Stage Manager – Meghann Deveroux, Assistant Stage Manager – Rachel Phillips, Costume Designer – Heather Stewart, Set Designer – Ken Schmidt, Construction Foreman – Bill Case, Light Designer – Brandon Dupree, Sound Designer – Joshua Finch, Props Coordinator – Abby Wolff, Sound Board Operator – Matt Pollock, Light Board Operator – Brittany Becker

“The Drowsy Chaperone” continues at OCTA through Sept. 23
Tickets may be reserved by calling by calling 913-782-2990.

Olathe Civic Theatre
Association (OCTA)



Tags: OCTA, Olathe Civic Theatre Association, “The Drowsy Chaperone”, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment