

local news

Theater Troupe Brings Glass Slippers To Savannah Center

Smash Productions will present the hit Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Cinderella" on April 11-12.

By MICHAEL FORTUNA
Daily Sun Staff Writer

A familiar tale that fits as snugly as a glass slipper will make its way back onto the stage through the efforts of Smash Productions.

The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Cinderella" will bring a bit of magic to audiences at 2 and 7 p.m. April 11-12 at Savannah Center.

Directed by Bob Stehman, this edition is a mixture of the version shown on TV in 1965 starring Lesley Ann Warren, as well as the 1997 edition featuring Whitney Houston and Brandy.

"It's the only Rodgers and Hammerstein musical that they wrote for television rather than the stage," Stehman said.

Stehman picked the musical for the nostalgic factor, especially since a lot of the cast remembered seeing the Warren version on TV.

"I've enjoyed watching the characters come alive," Stehman said. "We have some seasoned actors and some newcomers. I've watched them all work together to create these characters."

Stehman also brought in students from area elementary and middle schools to play the four mice and the cat. The production will feature a live seven-piece band to provide the music.

"I think it's very uplifting to the cast and to the audience," said Stehman, of the Village of Bonita. "We get a lot of comments from the audience on how much they enjoyed the band."

Pinky Bigley takes on the role of the musical's namesake. "She is strong and a little woeful sometimes," said Bigley, of the Village of Desoto. "She has a good outward disposition. She sees the good in people."

One of her favorite songs is "In My Own Little Corner," in which Cinderella is fantasizing about different adventures.

"I do this with the little kids as mice," Bigley said. "They're just too adorable."

Bigley is playing her second princess in The Villages, first playing Belle in The Villages Musical Theater's rendition of "Beauty and the Beast."

"It's the rags-to-riches story everybody loves," Bigley said of "Cinderella." "It's the underdog winning, so to speak. I love all the cast. They were picked perfectly for their roles."

Mark Kirschenbaum is playing Prince Christopher, the man who is throwing together a ball to hopefully find his true love.

"He's a lovesick, gentle, kind, fair, royal man," said Kirschenbaum, of the Village of Pennecamp. "I love how sweet he is."

While in elementary school, Kirschenbaum saw "Cinderella" when a touring production put it on in South Florida. When he knew he was getting the part of the prince, Kirschenbaum made sure not to see any of the renditions.

"I wanted to do my own thing without being influenced by other actors' choices," he said. "I love Shakespeare, and there are bits and parts of this story that remind me of 'Romeo and Juliet,' with love at first sight, the star-crossed lovers. This brings me to my acting roots and I love that."

Stepping into the dastardly shoes of the stepmother is Deborah Gibbons.

"She's a manipulator," said Gibbons, of the Village of Glenbrook. "She will do anything for her daughters."



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BOB STEHMAN
director



Mark Kirschenbaum, from left, plays Prince Christopher. Pinky Bigley plays Cinderella. Deborah Gibbons plays the stepmother and Tim Casey plays Lionel in Smash Productions' upcoming rendition of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Cinderella" to be presented April 11-12 at Savannah Center.

Michael Fortuna,
Daily Sun

She's a lot of fun to do. She has different emotional levels of evil."

Gibbons grew up watching the Warren TV movie on multiple occasions.

"I can say every word with Pinky," Gibbons said. "It's iconic. They love the music. You'll have people singing along in the audience."

Now she gets to inhabit the world on stage.

"You become more alive," Gibbons said. "With every scene, something pops into your head to try. When I did one line, everyone went, 'Ooh, that was nasty.'"

One of her favorite songs from the musical is "A Lovely Night," where she gets to sing with her two daughters and Cinderella.

"That's a lot of fun," Gibbons said. "It's a cute band moment."

Tim Casey plays Lionel, the royal steward who's trying to get the prince married.

"He's kind of the wingman for the prince," said Casey, of the Village of Chitty Chatty. "He's looking out for him and the royal family. He's got a great song in the show, 'The Prince Is Giving a Ball.' He's comic relief. I'm good at that."

Casey believes the musical's theme will resonate with the audience.

"Everyone hopes they have a fairy godmother watching their back," Casey said.

An American Sign Language interpreter will be available for the 2 p.m. show on April 12. Tickets are \$40 and up and are available at any Villages Box Office location or online at thevillagesentertainment.com.

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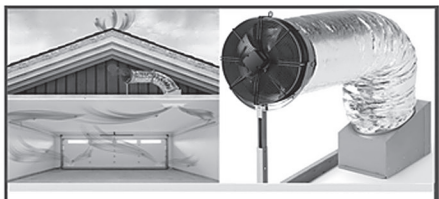
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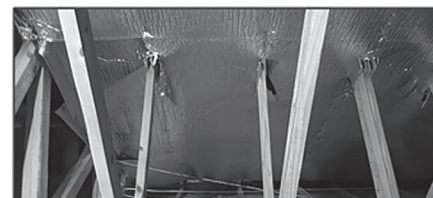
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