



Entertainment

Theater Review: OCP goes classy with 'Mr. Roberts'

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By Loyal Fairman

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OMAHA – Director Susan Baer Collins has all hands on deck in the Howard and Rhonda Hawks Mainstage Theatre at the Omaha Community Playhouse for this excellent production of "Mr. Roberts." This Tony Award-winning play is about life aboard the cargo ship USS Reluctant in the South Pacific during World War II. The play was written by Thomas Heggen and Joshua Logan.

Lt. JG Doug Roberts is played by Michael McCandless. Mr. Roberts is the cargo officer on the ship, which is stationed off a small island in the South Pacific, hundreds of miles from the battlefront. Its most important duty is delivering toilet paper and toothpaste to the American troops. He is very good as the soft spoken officer who wants to get into battle before the war is over. He is constantly putting in for a transfer, which is always turned down by The Captain of the ship, who is played by Doug Blackburn. Blackburn is super as The Captain hated by all the crew.

Ron Chvala plays Doc, who is the doctor on the ship who deals with all sorts of sick duty problems. This seems to happen whenever the crew is faced with unloading and loading cargo. Doc is a great character.

Ensign Frank Pulver, who is played by Jonathan Purcell, is a funny character who avoids The Captain and has a way with the women. Only problem is there aren't any women on the island until a group of nurses arrive. The only lady in the cast is Lt. Ann Girard, who is played by Beth Paprocki. The main characters in the show are fantastic.

The actors who really do an exceptional job are the many sailors on the ship. The ensemble really makes the show move, including: Don Harris, John Morgan, Frank Insolera Jr., Matt Allen, Chad Singleton, Chris Elston, Michael Marsden, Tim McCandless, Ben Chrystak, Jay Huse, Mark Kocsis, Jeff Dahms, Joel Herdzina, John Carlson, Richard Borg, Patrick McCaslin and Daniel Sukup. One of the funniest scenes is when the crew gets an over-due shore leave and returns to the ship after almost destroying the island.

We can't forget one of the most important characters in the show: The Captain's cherished palm tree. That palm tree is hated by everyone on the ship except The Captain. This show has lots of laughs with a touch of drama at the end.

This is a fantastic production of a classic comedy at the Omaha Community Playhouse. The box office can be reached at (402) 553-0800. Ticket prices are \$32 adults and \$21 for students. Curtain times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and Sunday at 2 and 6:30 p.m. "Mr. Roberts" runs through May 9.

Reviewer Loyal Fairman can be reached at lfairman@woodbinetwiner.com.

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