

48 buried - 4 to go: 'Nun' funnier than this

Written by By TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
Friday, 21 August 2009 11:13



The Little Sisters of Hoboken have a problem: 52 of their order keeled over suddenly after eating tainted vichyssoise.

Through their creative efforts, the surviving sisters raised enough money to bury 48 of their dearly departed, but since the Reverend Mother used the remaining funds to buy a Blu-Ray recorder for the rec room, four of the recently dead are now chilling out in the convent's freezer. Not a good thing.

In order to get the New Jersey Health Department off their backs and bury their friends, the sisters decide to put on a charity talent show, casting themselves as stars.

Thus is the premise of "Nunsense," the Community Players' current production, running through Sunday.

Director Mike Dodd, who was cast in the original production 11 years ago, said he's been wanting to do the play for a long time.

"It was 11 years ago that we did the play," said Dodd, who is also cast as Father Michael. "It's been a lot of work, but it's also been a lot of fun."

Joining Dodd are Betty Green as Reverend Mother Sister Mary Regina; Pamela Clayton, as Mistress of Novices; Sister Mary Hubert; Tammy McGary, as Sister Robert Anne; Melissa Bilyeu, as Sister Mary Leo; and Tiffany Stenger, as Sister Mary Amnesia.

The five women are perfectly cast. Green is as jolly as she is stern and her scene at the end of act one had the near-capacity audience howling - in a good way.

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Clayton carries the big musical numbers with ease. She has a commanding voice and the stage presence to match. Her "Holier Than Thou" number at the end makes you want to stand up and shout, "Amen."

McGary plays a "Jerzy girl" gone good instead of bad. Think a saintly Carmella Soprano and you've got the character McGary creates.

Bilyeu adds a new dimension to her vocation by donning toe shoes and doing several balletic steps, with hilarious results.

It is the 16-year-old Stenger, however, that steals the show. As a nun with no memory, she manages to be both angelic and addled – while never ceasing to be 100% adorable.

Stenger, who will be a junior this year at Sulphur Springs High School, says she wants to be an actress, having performed in "High School Musical" and "Grease" during her school career.

"I love it," Stenger said after Thursday night's performance. "It's what I want to do."

"Nonsense" opens with all five women on stage, singing and dancing as they climb invisible ladders.

"Though we're on our way to heaven, we're here to raise some hell."

What the women did Thursday night was raise a helluva a good time, complete with a theater full of laughter.

Brava!

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"Nunsense" runs tonight and Saturday night at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10.

Call 903-885-0107 for reservations, which are recommended.