



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2011

review - Don't Hug Me I'm Pregnant

CRITIC'S PICK

Don't Hug Me, I'm Pregnant

book & lyrics by Phil Olson

music by Paul Olson

directed by Doug Engalla

choreographed by Stan Mazin

Secret Rose Theatre

through November 20

Once you enter the world according to Phil Olson, there's no turning back. Be prepared to have a good time, or bust! Their fourth ***Don't Hug Me*** musical in a row, ***Don't Hug Me, I'm Pregnant*** - they referring to the Olson brothers Phil and Paul - is as usual obscenely silly and over-the-top, but a definite charmer, no matter how tired the pregnant jokes become. Now at the Secret Rose Theatre the show is guaranteed to please and has ***big bit*** written all over it. Ya, sure, you betcha!

When Clara (Rebekah Dunn), Gunner (Patrick Foley), Kanute (Bert Emmett), Bernice (Natalie Lander) and Aarvid (Greg Barnett) get together, regardless of what they're talking about, you're going to listen. These folks -Gunner and Clara own the Bunyan Bay bar, the Bunyan (dynamite set design by Chris Winfield) - can bring up the weather, duck hunting, a baby shower or Clara's size as a pregnant wife, and ears perk up immediately waiting for the punch line.



Such is the way with Phil Olson plays. If Neil Simon had been born and raised in Minnesota, he would probably have turned out a lot like Phil Olson. Or do I have that backwards? No matter, I think you catch my drift. The funny humor is nonstop, and most of it comes out of character. We know Kanute is stupid, and he hear that constantly, but when he opens his mouth to react, it's unbelievably ridiculous and we laugh in spite of all the repetition. Take, for example, when he calls an avalanche a *snowalanche*, or out of fear that he and his friends will be trapped forever under megadrifts of snow, he starts thinking about the lack of food, cannibalism...and eating Gunner... barbecuing him, fricaseeing him and runs around with a fork and bottle of ketchup in tow. Get the picture? Overbearingly silly, but hilarious! Another point well taken with this show is its positive concept of marriage despite the jokes to the contrary. Gunner and Clara have periods of misery during her pregnancy but that doesn't stop Kanute from wanting to be a godfather or Kanute and Aarvid from competing for Bernice's hand. These folks find happiness in just about every crisis. It's infectious!



NATALIE LANDER as 'Bernice' in
DON'T HUG ME, I'M PREGNANT
World Premiere September 30, 2011
The Secret Rose Theatre, North Hollywood

The cast is just great. Emmett steals every moment as Kanute, making him about the most affable jerk on the planet. Dunn is such a wonderful actress. Every moment of pain and anguish is genuine. And she is the perfect straight man for Kanute and Gunner's comments. Lander is cute & adorable and has her best moments when she struts her sexy stuff as "Little Miss Muffet". Barnett has his finest hour singing and dancing, and Foley is perfectly deadpan until the last scene where his emotions pour out earnestly.

Phil Olson has written some very funny lyrics to his brother Paul's music, and director Doug Engalla keeps the pacing up, bright and tight from start to finish. Stan Mazin's choreography is right on the money, especially with Aarvid's moves and sexy pelvis twisting.

Go one, go all to ***Don't Hug Me, I'm Pregnant!*** Even if your connections to Minnesota are few, you'll catch on fast and have a riotously good time!

5 out of 5 stars



Posted by Don Grigware at [1:12 PM](#)