

CRITIC'S CORNER

Theater Review: 'Don't Hug Me, I'm Pregnant' at Secret Rose Theatre

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By [Radomir Luza](#) October 3, 2011



The biggest compliment you can pay a musical comedy is that it is funny.

DHM Productions and Angry Amish Productions' Staging of The World Premiere of *Don't Hug Me I'm Pregnant*, running through Nov. 20 at the [Secret Rose Theatre](#) in the NoHo Arts District, is that and so much more.

The story of five friends, one of whom is pregnant and in labor, snowed-in at The Bunyan, a bar in the small Northern Minnesota town of Bunyan Bay, proves vastly entertaining and provides a depth uncommon in theatrical comedies and musicals.

Phil Olson (Book and Lyrics) and Paul Olson (Music) combine for a hilarious yet tender fourth chapter in the "Don't Hug Me" series.

The Musical features two enchanting through-lines that payoff in their share of laughs and tears: a husband helping deliver his wife's baby because of the weather, and the same husband, now a new father, breaking through his defense mechanisms to discover a sensitivity and gentleness he had almost lost.

The writing is crisp, intelligent and doesn't miss a beat. The music is rhythmical, timely and catchy as it adds a weight and lightness to the proceedings.

Director Doug Engalla keeps the action tight, engaging and generous in chemistry, energy and enthusiasm.

The choreography by Stan Mazin is imaginative and light on its feet. These actors want to and are not afraid to dance.

Rarely has an ensemble been blessed with such motivation and desire.

Patrick Foley (Gunner) is perfect for the part in an understated, comedic manner that makes his catharsis that much more enticing.

Greg Barnett (Aarvid) brings a kindness and maturity to his rather intellectual counterpart that surprises and moves.

Natalie Lander (Bernice) sizzles, satisfies and salutes the embodiment of the old-fashioned girlfriend. Lander is purely unafraid.

Rebekah Dunn (Clara) solidifies her place as one of the best actresses on the Los Angeles stage with a heartfelt, passionate and courageous turn as the pregnant wife.

But it is Bert Emmett (Kanute) who runs away with the show. Parts cunning, hilarity and envy, his is a performance not soon forgotten or replicated.

In the end, there probably is no end in sight for this franchise as it touches not only the funny and musical bones, but the very content that makes Americans Americans and human beings human beings. One cannot say more about a piece of art.

Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m.

Sunday Matinee at 2 p.m.

[Secret Rose Theatre](#)

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