

# 'Carousel' stirs the emotions



*Cody Heuer as 'Billy Bigelow' and Chelsea Serocke as 'Julie Jordan' in CAROUSEL*

## Students give inspired performance

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The students and faculty of Southeast's Department of Theater and Dance outdid themselves with their vibrant and emotionally stirring new production of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "Carousel."

Based on the Ferenc Molnar play, "Liliom", the musical is set in a small New England town in the 1800s. "Carousel" tells the ill-fated love story of demure heroine Julie Jordan and bad-boy Billy Bigelow who fall in love after meeting at the town's carousel.

The two young lovers quickly marry and experience their fair share of troubles throughout the first act of the musical; troubles that lead to Billy Bigelow's eventual suicide. "Carousel's" second act deals with Bigelow's redemption, as he is sent back to Earth 15 years after his death, in order to make amends with those he has left behind in order to earn his entry into Heaven.

The musical's score is one of Rodgers and Hammerstein's finest, and adds an emotional depth to the story that would otherwise be absent in a non-musical adaptation.

New York theater director Dennis Courtney leads his performers to inspired performances and presents the musical in a fresh light in Southeast's new staging of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic. The first production element of note is the set design.

Taking a conceptual approach, Courtney provides his cast with a bold yet unobtrusive backdrop that puts focus on the emotional themes of the musical and the outstanding performances given by the production's cast members.

Carousel's heroine, Julie Jordan, is beautifully played by Chelsea Serocke, who sings the role with a stunning soprano voice that would put most Broadway singers to shame. She succeeds brilliantly in conveying both her character's innocence and strength, and navigates the Rodgers and Hammerstein score with skill and finesse.

Cody Heuer, who plays "Carousel's" tragic hero Billy Bigelow, serves as the perfect counterpart to his character's romantic interest. Heuer brings both overwhelming charisma and charm to his performance, enabling the audience to root for and sympathize with an otherwise challenging character. Add in a phenomenal vocal performance, and Heuer provides the musical with a forceful male lead.

Serocke and Heuer are boosted by exceptional performances given by supporting cast members.

Stephanie Peterson, who plays Julie Jordan's best friend Carrie Pipperidge, matches Serocke's vocal talent and performs her character's songs with ease and refinement, making her performance seem effortless. Danielle Hargis also makes an impact with her brassy turn as Mrs. Mullen and displays a gift for commanding the stage.

The outstanding lead and supporting performances are enhanced by exciting choreography danced by an energetic and entertaining ensemble cast and the overall effect makes Southeast's new staging of "Carousel" a triumph.

"Carousel" runs from Feb. 24-28 at the River Campus's Bedell Hall. For more information visit [www.semo.edu/rivercampus/events](http://www.semo.edu/rivercampus/events). For tickets, visit [www.Metrotix.com](http://www.Metrotix.com) or call the River Campus box office directly at 573-651-2265.

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