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Shenanigans plentiful in 'Forum'

By [APRIL WILKERSON](#)

SNS Staff Writer

In its worship of the gods of comedy and tragedy, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" doesn't give the tragedy god a second glance.

It's "tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight" in this delightfully irreverent, hilariously bawdy production, on stage at Lyric Theatre in Oklahoma City through Saturday.

From the familiar opening song "Comedy Tonight" through the many other musical romps, "Forum" is a fast-paced, witty farce. Leading the way is dedicated slave Pseudolus (Jamie Torcellini), who sets the stage for ancient Rome and promises that the show will take your mind off your troubles.

The show is set on a street in Rome in front of the houses of Lycus, Senex and Erronius. When Senex and his wife (Terry Attebery and Cyndi Steele Harrod) leave to visit her mother, their slave Hysterium (Jonathan Beck Reed) is charged with protecting the innocence of their coming-of-age son, Hero (Sam McCoy). But Hero and Pseudolus hatch a plan: if Pseudolus gets Hero a girl from the House of Marcus Lycus, then Pseudolus can go free.

From there, the shenanigans escalate. Thrown into the mix are a befuddled old man, Erronius (Enoch Elms); a blustery gladiator, Miles Gloriosus (Mat Govich); Lycus' odd assortment of women; three comical proteans; and Hero's true love, Philia (Amanda Martin).

So many of the characters have funny moments, but this show belongs to Pseudolus and Hysterium. As the "ringmaster" of all that is humorous, Torcellini is wonderful as Pseudolus. Nathan Lane comes to mind, but at Lyric, the role is all Torcellini's. He is funniest with his three young charges (Chris Castleberry, Scott Harrison and Jonathan McElroy), as they bumble about. Torcellini plays well opposite all the characters, however, and his charm is consistent. Whether he's a soothsayer saying a sooth, or dreaming of his liberation in "Free," he leads the show.

As Hysterium, Reed is the most versatile of the performers. His previous Lyric appearances have not allowed him to showcase so much of his comedic talents, but with Hysterium, he proves his humorous flair. His song "I'm Calm" is one of funniest of the show.

Martin gives Philia a nice voice and presence, and she and Hero play the young lovers well. Senex and Lycus join Pseudolus and Hysterium in "Everybody Ought to Have a Maid," another enjoyable routine.

"Forum" is directed and choreographed by Dennis Courtney, whose attention to detail is evident, especially in the final caper of mistaken identities. Music direction is by Mariann Searle, and the orchestra provides some nice woodwind and percussion sounds. Doug Getzoff did the functional set design with its bright pinks, blues and oranges.



Pictured left to right are Terry Attebery as Senex, Jonathan Beck Reed as Hysterium, Cyndi Steele Harrod as Domina and Jamie Torcellini as Pseudolus. "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" continues at Lyric Theatre through Saturday.

Courtesy Photo

Classifieds

"Forum's" fun is in its irreverence and farcical scenarios that have stood the test of time. This show allows for some ad-libbing, which is often funnier than the script. The director also has worked in some modern-day references for even more "comedy tonight."

For ticket information, call the Lyric Theatre box office at (405) 524-9312.

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