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Rock 'n' roll cult classic 'Hedwig' comes to FST

By CHARLIE HUISKING
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Director Dennis Courtney describes "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" as "part rock concert, part cabaret act, part stand-up comedy act," with a dash of performance art, Greek tragedy and therapy-session angst thrown in.

Picture

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Interested? Hedwig and the Angry Inch

Opens at 7:30 p.m. Friday (following previews at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday) at Florida Studio Theatre's Gompertz Theatre, 1247 First St., Sarasota.

Through May 26.

Tickets are \$19 to \$34.

Call 366-9000 or access <http://www.fst2000.org/>.

But for Courtney, the show's point is easily expressed in one line of dialogue: "It's what I have to work with."

That's what Hedwig, the East German transsexual glam-rock singer in the show's title, says about herself. The line refers most directly to the botched sex-change operation that has left her with an "angry inch" of scar tissue.

"But to me, that line sums up the theme of the show," Courtney said. "We are not all dealt the same cards, but we all have to do the best with what we have to work with."

"People like Hedwig are my heroes, because they don't roll over and die when things happen. They find a way to flourish, whether as a big rock star or as 'an internationally ignored song stylist,' as Hedwig describes herself."

Opening Friday at Florida Studio Theatre's Gompertz Theatre, "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" was a huge off-Broadway hit in 1998. The New York Times called it a "thought-provoking musical about the quest for individuality, the attempt to forge an identity that works for head and heart."

Written by John Cameron Mitchell (who originated the part of Hedwig and starred in a subsequent film), the show has music and lyrics by Stephen Trask.

"The rock 'n' roll music is the first thing that drew me to the show," Courtney said. "Before I saw it, I heard this incredible score. Even though there have been lots of so-called 'rock musicals' onstage, this is the first score that really sounded authentic to me."

The rock flavor also appealed to actors David Colbert, who plays Hedwig, and Petra DeLuca, who plays Yitzak, a backup singer of indeterminate gender.

"I heard the CD at someone's party and knew immediately I wanted to do this show," said Colbert, who has played Hedwig in four previous productions.

DeLuca, who has done the show three times, described herself as "very rock 'n' roll. I've been in lots of bands. I love throwing yourself around onstage and emoting through lyrics. That definitely happens in this show."

The play is set during a concert in a dive bar, where Hedwig and her band are playing. Between songs, Hedwig talks about her unhappy boyhood in a cramped East German apartment, and about her romance

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