

A perfect spin on imperfection

'I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change' hits all the right notes

REVIEWER'S CHAIR



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I walked in unsure of what to expect. I walked out humming and treading on air. This musical about the epic journey of love is the date that goes right.

As with the love lives we all create, "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change," is not a continuous story with consistent characters, but a series of strange vignettes tied together. While each scene depicts a familiar love, dating or family situation, the genius of the play is that these typical set-ups conceal unexpected moments and outcomes.

The play opens with a prologue. The cast, consisting of two nameless men and two nameless women, emerge on stage wearing white robes and chanting strangely about the origins of men and women. Soon the robes are cast off,

revealing four singles preparing for first dates, singing about the anxiety, terror and longing that lurks within that first "Hi."

Every scene has a title like "A Stud and a Babe," "The Lasagna Incident" and "Sex and the Married Couple." The titles are displayed to the audience before each scene on placards held by Peterborough Players Second Company actors Darcie Champagne and Taylor Miller, who would have stolen the show with their appropriate facial expressions if the show wasn't so good.

But it was.

Like flavor in food, the music in a musical is, at the core, what the entire experience comes down to, and "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" draws from a wide variety to arouse the
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late. We hear tango, spiritual, rock and roll and, of course, the Broadway musical finale, a genre of its own.

Everybody in the company is an amazing singer and actor. They play many different characters, and these actors were no doubt chosen for their versatility. Bridget Beirne believably plays a flippant teenager in the back seat of the family car and a widow in her 70s or 80s along with almost every age in between. Kirby Ward emanates carelessness, responsibility, charm and rage in his plethora of characters. Joshua Finkel is a nerd, a man's man, a bore and a stud. Pamela Bob takes on the full range of emotions, a hopeful lover-to-be, a disappointed waspy mother, an overbearing Jewish wife and a hurt and bitter divorcee.

The actors had wonderful synergy too, working well together, whatever the pairing. Appropriately, during the final bows and the final number, they paired off in multiple different combinations for final embraces, kisses, glances and high-fives.

Acting, music and writing are all top notch, and there are very few moments where something does not work. The

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE

Credits: Book and lyrics by Joe Di Pietro, music by Jimmy Roberts, directed by Dennis Courtney.

Playing: At Peterborough Players through July 26.

Tickets: \$38-\$43; \$15 rush tickets tonight only.

most notable is the song, "Waiting," which comes halfway through the second act. What does waiting in line at the women's bathroom have to do with love?

But the few awkward moments are matched with many, many good ones. In the very next scene, an old man reflects on his whole life spent being in love with his wife. He pours her another cup of coffee sweetly over the morning paper.

Dennis Courtney both directs and choreographs the show, and does a beautiful job with both. Particularly interesting is the choreography of rolling chairs in the second act where all four actors sit and scream at one another in "the family that drives together," one of the most difficult aspects of family life,

the play seems to argue.

Charlie Morgan's set is interesting. Red and blue, yin and yang, and male and female symbols set up the dichotomy written into the play of the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the two sexes.

One of the best aspects of the set, however, is the placement of the piano. Bonus points for getting the Peterborough Players' grand piano eight feet in the air on a platform overlooking the stage. Musical director/pianist Michael Sebastian is visible playing above the stage along with violinist Larissa Blitz. Don't sit too close to the stage, or you'll miss the added comedy of watching them interact with one another.

The play ends as it begins — robes, biblical references and that first "Hi" — underlying the cyclical nature of love. The audience leaves vindicated; our struggles and the struggles of those around us attempting to grapple with the mystery of relationships is as worthy as it is impossible to understand.

"I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" lets us see what we all look like trudging our way through and have a good laugh.