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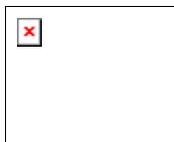
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Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL)

FST's on the right note with its season opener

October 13, 2003

Section: FLORIDA WEST

Page: E4

JAY HANDELMAN [jay.handelman@heraldtribune.com](mailto:jay.handelman@heraldtribune.com)

Musical theater wouldn't be half as much fun or interesting if it weren't for the songwriting team of John Kander and Fred Ebb.

The creators of "Cabaret," "Chicago," "Kiss of the Spider Woman" and other shows and movies have an ability to raise the human spirit while dealing with the sorrows we all face. An upbeat Kander melody can be beautifully matched with one of Ebb's melancholy or thought-provoking lyrics. These are songs that grow richer with each hearing. You may be led by a catchy tune, but you can dig deep and keep finding new meanings.

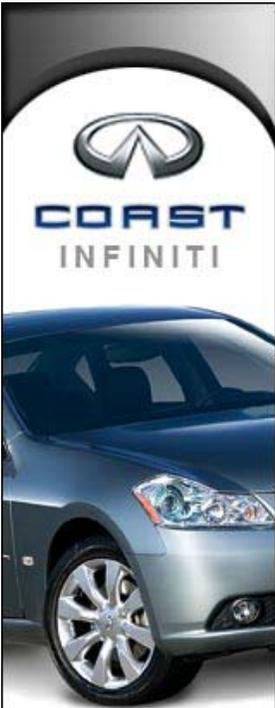
Some of the team's best work is highlighted in the engaging revue "The World Goes 'Round," which opens the 30th season at Florida Studio Theatre.

A fine cast of five puts heart and spirit into more than two dozen songs, which are cleverly staged by director and choreographer **Dennis Courtney**.

Against a beautiful city skyline (complete with floating clouds) designed by Michael Lasswell and beautifully lit by Jeffrey Dillon, Courtney stages various journeys through love, romance and loss. Marcella Beckwith's bright and shiny costumes add to the tales.

As conceived by Scott Ellis, Susan Stroman and David Thompson, the songs are grouped to offer complementary moods and counterpoints. In one segment, Christopher Vettel tries to recall a past love in "I Don't Remember You," while Kilty Reidy tries to forget his in "Sometimes a Day Goes By." The two distinct melodies are then beautifully combined. Similar magic is created, later, in a combination of "We Can Make It," "Maybe This Time" and "Isn't This Better."

Musical director Michael Sebastian has done some fine work



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building harmonies that sound sweet and tight, particularly in jazzy arrangements of "There Goes the Ball Game" and the surprisingly fresh "Cabaret." Even "New York, New York" sounds somewhat new, even as Courtney tosses in some Liza Minnelli moves.

Vettel, Reidy, Elisabeth Van Duyne and Gayle Samuels make their debuts in the production. Reidy is fun as the goofy nerd who wins sympathy during "Mr. Cellophane" and as a man devoted to the pastries of "Sara Lee." Vettel has a potent voice that rings out in the title song from "Kiss of the Spider Woman." Samuels has a big voice that sets a bright tone for the opening "And the World Goes 'Round," but it's more powerful than melodic. Van Duyne is sweet as the ingenue, but there's not much depth to her singing. She moves with grace and ease through "Arthur in the Afternoon" and, later, in a romantic duet with Reidy.

But it is Forrest Richards who shines brightest. One of Sarasota's finest performers gets a chance to show her range as she turns her numbers into fun but intelligent stories. She's playful in "Ring Them Bells" about a woman who travels around the world to meet the guy next door, and wonderfully introspective during "Colored Lights." You can see that there's thought and meaning behind each word and gesture.

It's that style that perfectly captures the complexities and joys of the work of Kander and Ebb and brings this enjoyable show to its emotional peaks.

#### THEATER REVIEW

#### THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND

Music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb. Conceived by Scott Ellis, Susan Stroman, David Thompson. Directed and choreographed by **Dennis Courtney**. Reviewed Oct. 9. Through Nov. 29. Florida Studio Theatre, 1241 N. Palm Ave., Sarasota. Tickets are \$28,\$30. Call 366-9000.

Caption: PHOTO / ALAN FERGUSON

From left, Christopher Vettel, Gayle Samuels, Elisabeth Van Duyne, Kilty Reidy and, seated, Forrest Richards star in "The World Goes 'Round" at Sarasota's Florida Studio Theatre.

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