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THEATER REVIEW

Theater review: 'It Shoulda Been You'

By JULINDA LEWIS Special correspondent Jun 2, 2017



Jenny Steinberg (Georgia Rogers Farmer) is the center of the hurricane of nuptials that aren't even hers in the wacky wedding musical "It Shoulda Been You," produced by Richmond Triangle Players at the Robert B. Moss Theatre, 1300 Altamont Ave.

John MacLellan

June is synonymous with weddings and the situations people create, intentionally or not, plant the seeds for laughter. Enter "It Shoulda Been You," a rollicking musical comedy about a wedding gone wrong for all the right reasons — or should that be gone right for all the wrong reasons? — and you are invited.

Director Jon Kretzu has had a long-term relationship with this work — with book and lyrics by Brian Hargrove and music and concept by Barbara Anselmi — and it has finally been made formal on the stage of the Richmond Triangle Players' newly-named Robert B. Moss Theatre.

Having watched the reactions of a high school student and her unsuspecting grandmother who were sitting next to me, I don't want to give away too much of the plot's twists and turns, because their reactions at the end of Act One were simply priceless. "What just happened?" the younger woman exclaimed, while her grandmother muttered, "What has my granddaughter brought me to?" Real life issues are addressed with equal parts humor and compassion.

I was expecting the major revelation by the bridal couple, but what I wasn't expecting was a full-blown musical, under the adept musical direction of Kim Fox. There are 11 songs in the first act and seven in the second and while none send you home humming the refrain, they do move the plot along and they do showcase the actors in a favorable light. Said lights were subtly designed, with an occasional colorful flourish, by Michael Jarret. Frank Foster's simple yet elegant hotel set had the abundance of doorways required for proper comedic timing of entrances and exits. They also allowed for smooth scene transitions and provided hiding places for inquisitive characters who were minding others' business.

The characters of "It Shoulda Been You" are a hodgepodge of actors well-suited to their roles. The bride (Grey Garrett) is Jewish and her groom (Luke Newsome) is Catholic. This leaves the door wide open for controversy and it walks in quite boldly. The bride's mother (Jacqueline O'Connor) is a strident but lovable caricature of the interfering Jewish mother, while the mother of the groom (Susan Sanford) lives out of a bottle and by the

motto, what doesn't kill you will make you drink! Neither one wants this marriage to happen and both let down their social facades in a hysterical number called "Nice."

The four parents, along with dotty Uncle Morty (John Mincks) and salacious Aunt Sheila (Louise Ricks), all let their feelings be known via the song "It Shoulda Been You" after they encounter the bride's ex, a nice Jewish boy played by Ian Page, who was alerted to the fact of the impending nuptials by an accidental phone call. A father and son talk between the groom (Newsome) and his father (Mark Persinger) literally becomes a song and dance — of the soft-shoe variety, and the awkward hugs between these two are epic.

Durron Tyre and Jessi Johnson play a best man and co-maid of honor who are keeping an explosive secret. Both should work in espionage as neither drops a hint until the final scene of Act One. Much of the narrative and drama are expertly controlled by the bride's older and still unmarried sister, played by Georgia Rogers Farmer — until she decides to let loose with "Jenny's Blues." The eerily intuitive and outre wedding planner, played with scene stealing detail by Kirk Morton, delightfully holds everything together, wraps it up, and virtually puts a bow on it. "It Shoulda Been You" is a delightful musical comedy — all that's missing is cake.

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'It Shoulda Been You'

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Where: Richmond Triangle Players at the Robert B. Moss Theatre, 1300 Altamont Ave.

When: Through July 1

Tickets: \$10-\$35

Details: (804) 346-8113 or www.rtriangle.org

