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'Broadway Bits' awes with community talent

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What started out as a mellow meandering through the seasons with "A Year With Frog and Toad" ended with a little deviant behavior from some "Guys and Dolls" but there is no reason to discredit any of the performance in between, because "Broadway Bits" by the Sierra School of Performing Arts is a magical musical journey that started Friday night and will run through Sunday.

Taking the best musical numbers and well-written acts from five Broadway favorites and boiling it down to two hours is no easy task, which is why SSPA art director and "Broadway Bits" director Janet Lazarus began editing and chopping in July.

All the hard work paid off for Lazarus, who directed some of the area's finest talent in what has to be the best community production of the year.

Crafting parts for the children and casting teens into roles that were spot on for their singing and acting skills made "A Year With Frog and Toad" a delight for audience members, who cooed and awed over the children who sang in perfect pitch to compliment their cast members and were perfectly in sync with their steps choreographed by Padma Rothchild.

Following up and excellent start to the evening with a well-known musical could have been tricky, but SSPA's rendition of "Hairspray" kept the fun and witty musical numbers flowing.

No version of "Hairspray" would be complete without a perfect Tracy Turnblad and her mother Edna. Wonderfully performed, the comedic timing executed by Stacy Johnson, who plays Tracy, and Ryan Kelly, who plays Edna, is amazing. Also a stand out, is nicest girl in town courtesy of "The Corny Collins Show" Amber, played by Holly Browne, who has an amazing voice and a knack for playing the mean girl.

Taking a short intermission, during which the crowd buzzed about how talented the actors from "Frog and Toad" are and the impressive vocal abilities from the "Hairspray" cast, the audience knew that after intermission something special would happen.

No one would have guessed that special moment would happen between and

elephant named Horton and a one-feathered bird named Gertrude McFuzz in “Seussical the Musical.”

While the entire “Suessical” cast did a wonderful job of acting out “Horton Hears a Who” in less than 30 minutes without leaving much out, the performance was upstaged by a down played duet between Horton, also played by Kelly, and Gertrude, played by Haley Forsyth.

Kelly and Forsyth’s ability to harmonize and stay, not only in tune, but connect with each other during “Notice Me, Horton,” was amazing and completely took any attention away from the other numbers in the act, which is tough to do since they are so wonderfully performed and choreographed by Adam Whitney.

No one would have thought with the high production caliber of “Broadway Bits” that a duet performed on an empty stage, except for one folding chair, would steal the performance — but it did.

Kelly and Forsyth have amazing voices that undoubtedly will take them as far as they choose to go in the performing arts.

A tough act to follow, “Omigod You Guys” from “Legally Blonde the Musical” allowed the audience to composed themselves and stop the whispers what started after “Notice Me, Horton.”

“Omigod You Guys” is a short number but catchy and fun. Even though it is the only number performed in “Broadway Bits” from “Legally Blonde” the cast keeps the slightly ditzzy piece lively and enjoyable.

Making the other musicals seem bare in terms of sets, props and costumes – which they were not in the least – “Guys and Dolls” upped the ante with the men dressed in complete suits and fedoras and the women looking beautiful in 1920s looking vintage dresses.

Keeping the story line straight forward between the social deviants – the gamblers, drinkers and dancers – and the social saints, “Guys and Dolls” charmed as “Broadway Bits” closing number, guaranteeing audience members will be singing “Luck Be A Lady” the next day.

“Broadway Bits” is a community must see and will also be performed Saturday at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$16 for adults and \$12 for students/seniors if purchased in advance or \$20 for adults and \$15 for students/seniors at the door.

Performances are held in the Proscenium Theatre in the Church Fine Arts Building on the UNR campus.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit sierraschoolofperformingarts.org.