

7/16/09

THEATER REVIEW

Laughs burst from 'Big Bang'

History of world unfolds in Northport Music Theater's delightful show.

By **Judy Harrison**
BDN Staff



PHOTOS COURTESY NORTHPORT MUSIC THEATER

Tom Sagona (left) portrays Tokyo Rose and David Troup (right) is Shanghai Lil in "The Big Bang," onstage at Northport Music Theater this weekend.



Northport Music Theater wants theatergoers to do more than just watch "The Big Bang."

Stars Tom Sagona and David Troup ask the audience to invest in the musical extravaganza about the history of the world, budgeted at \$83.5 million, with a cast of 318 actors, 6,428 costumes, 1,400 wigs and 302 prosthetic devices.

"The Big Bang" begins when "man crawled out of the mire ... before the invention of fire" and abruptly ends with Woodstock. The two-man cast, accompanied by pianist

Jamie Hagedorn, performs in the borrowed apartment of Dr. and Mrs. Lipbalm, a vacationing proctologist and his wife.

While the songs are amusing sendups of traditional show tunes, the cleverest bit in this frenetic 90-minute history lesson is the way the characters use the props in the apartment. Curtains turn into togas, a plant supplies Indians their feathers, fringe from a hassock is transformed into a lion's mane, and two umbrellas and a tablecloth become the hoop skirt of a Southern belle.

The show was developed by composer Jed Feuer and writer and lyricist Boyd Graham in 1999 at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's Festival for New Musicals. It opened off-Broadway the next spring.

NMT's director Peter Clain, who staged the show in 2002 at the Belfast Maskers, knows exactly where the laughs are in this show and how to get the most out them. He also understands how to get the most out of a young actor and the best way to mine the wealth of experience a veteran brings to a

production.

Sagona, who graduated from the University of Maine in May, and Troup, who worked as a professional actor in New York for 20 years before moving to Maine four years ago, make a delightful team. Although both men have dark hair and eyes, Sagona is a tall drink of water compared with the fireplug Troup.

The duo work together like a well-oiled machine. Troup never overpowered the less-experienced Sagona. The younger actor, however, needs to learn to pace his performance. He looks like he's working so hard and his energy starts off so high, he has no place to go but down. By the end of the show, he appeared to be running out of gas.

That is a tiny flaw in the otherwise wonderfully funny, zany and delightfully charming musical. NMT took a big risk last year when it launched a professional company devoted to staging small, quality musicals. Theatergoers looking for something a bit offbeat should see "The Big Bang" and theater lovers should support NMT to ensure its survival.

jharrison@bangordailynews.net

990-8207

•••

IF YOU GO

What: "The Big Bang," by Jed Feuer, music, and Boyd Graham, book and lyrics

Where: Northport Music Theater, 851 Atlantic Highway (Route 1)

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 3:30 p.m. Sunday

Tickets: \$12-\$25

What else: 338-8383; www.northportmusictheater.com