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Theater review

'The Big Bang' cures cool summer blues

By Elisabeth Goodridge

NORTHPORT (July 14): We have all earned and yearned for a good laugh to kick off the summer, after a dismal, rainy June and the first weeks of July, which had many of us contemplating building an ark. How convenient that "The Big Bang", a rollicking, rambunctious ark of a madcap musical, has come along just when we need it.

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Final performances of "The Big Bang" are 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and 3:30 p.m. Sunday, July 17 through 19, at Northport Music Theater, Route 1.



Tom Sagona, left, appears as Mrs. Gandhi with David Troup as Mary, Mother of God in Northport Music Theater's "The Big Bang." (Photo by Alex Morrow)

Peter Clain, who directed this play superbly several years ago for the Belfast Maskers, has returned triumphantly to the Northport Music Theater with a new talented cast of two, count them, two actors — David Troup and Tom Sagona. For a breathless 90 minutes (no intermission), playing all the parts, they take the audience on an impossibly fast-paced backers' audition of "the most expensive Broadway musical ever written. It encompasses the entire history of civilization from the dawn of time to the present day. No expense has been spared."

The gimmick of this musical is that we, the audience, have been invited to a cocktail party in the fashionable Park Avenue apartment, borrowed for the occasion, of proctologist Dr. Lipmann, in a desperately earnest attempt by a show's two creators to raise money for its production. This premise is supported by the serving of canapes and beverages before the play, while the audience is encouraged to walk around the set (stylishly designed by Andy Bolduc in black, white and red). Pay close attention to the furnishings of Dr. Lipmann's apartment, because they will

turn up in the most astonishing and ingenious ways as props for the two frantically ebullient performers. To say that this is a "prop-driven" play would be an understatement. On several occasions, the audience broke into spontaneous applause at the clever use of the props alone (more kudos to Bolduc)!



David Troup, left, as Pocahontas and Tom Sagona as Minnie Haha. (Photo by Alex Morrow)

The two actors were exquisitely hilarious in this tour de force, playing everything from Adam and Eve to Julius Caesar, Napoleon and Josephine and Jimi Hendrix. One loses count of the costume changes. The lyrics are outrageous. Political correctness is gleefully trampled in the mud. Troup is especially gifted in his accents, ranging from over-the-top Irish, Castilian Spanish (for Queen Isabella) to "godfather Italian" (for Julius Caesar). His pop-diva rendition of Nefertiti is a gem. Sagona showed great physical range as well, including a wonderfully grotesque ancient soothsayer and a decadently Dietrich-like Eva Braun. Praise is also due to Jamie Hagedorn, the all-but-invisible accompanist, who is the backbone of the musical, managing effortlessly what must be a myriad of cues, not to mention serene flexibility in adapting to the improvisations of the moment.

This is a musical where actors can play full out, and while strenuous and exhausting, it inspires great fun. Despite a few opening night flubs, which were playfully and masterfully covered, the sense of gusto and enjoyment conveyed by the two actors was contagious. The pace does not let up. There was not a moment when the audience was not chuckling, which was only a brief respite from outright belly laughs, guffaws, shrieks and helpless gasps. The sheer insanity of the piece builds relentlessly, so that by the end, you are caught in its absurdity and left with aching sides, painful facial muscles, feeling as trashed as Dr. Lipmann's apartment and with a sense of awe at the unbelievable feat you have just witnessed. Another must see from the Northport Music Theater!



David Troup, left, as Caesar and Tom Sagona as The Soothsayer. (Photo by Alex Morrow)

All seats can be reserved by calling 338-8383. For more information about shows and youth camps, call or visit northportmusictheater.com. Plan to come early for the "cocktail party," which begins 45 minutes before show time.

Elisabeth Goodridge is a French instructor, writer, artist, sometime actor and longtime theater maven.

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