

DTG's 'Hallelujah Girls' a delightful romp

Burt Saidel



Hallelujah! This refers to The Dayton Theatre Guild's extra pre-holiday production, *The Hallelujah Girls*. Hallelujah fits this delightful romp, but also fits the boundless energy of the Guild and its totally devoted membership.

My readers and the Guild's audience will remember that it was only August 28, 2009 when the new theater opened with *Dangerous Liaisons*. They chose the most elaborate production they ever staged to open the yet incomplete theater. Paint and plaster were practically wet but the show went on and was a triumph.

"Liaisons" was followed by *The Sunshine Boys* in October. Their calendar moves as quickly as does ours; they added an extra show, to earn some more badly needed shekels and keep their collective noses firmly to the grindstone..

The result is another great evening of theater and beaming smiles from the exhausted but happy minions of the Guild. The playwriting combination of Jones/Hope/ Wooten has created nonsensical plays which tickle funny bones. *Christmas Belles* and *Dearly Departed* are but two of their hilarious lunacies.

Director Greg Smith is still intrigued by their off-the-wall comedy and mounted *The Hallelujah Girls* with his customary verve. He chose a cast of seven Guild superstars and one debut to lose their minds in front of full houses.

The play is sort of theatrical with comedy more ribald and endings

more happy. No one dies and everyone makes us laugh. Six ladies, all high school classmates, now residing firmly in their 50s, wear life's disappointments with dubious pride.

The magic of theater allowed the six to average age 50 plus. Three are young and beautiful and three are, well, older and beautiful. In the opening minutes, we learn about each of them. Barbara Jorgensen is trapped in the "marriage from hell." Ellen Finch has killed off three husbands, probably from sheer energy attrition, and accepts the epithet "Black Widow Spider" with a modicum of pride.

Stephanie Pratt, in her debut, balances a felonious no-good son, bleeding her dry financially and mentally. Dime novel reveries about glamorous romances which also end in elaborate tragedies are her refuge.

Darling Natasha Randall is the well-tolerated complete nut. She

makes every day a holiday with a costume to match. Prancing about as a witch, Statue of Liberty, Christmas elf, Geisha girl, arrow-laden cupid and Uncle Sam, she spouts Christmas carols tailored to whatever event she is celebrating.

Really lovely Heather Martin becomes the one everyone loves to hate. She must be wealthy considering her fashion parade ostentation. She manages to be the nemesis of everyone by dint of her sheer vitriol.

It is the beautiful and talented Katrina Kittle who is the protagonist and the only normal one – well sort of. Katrina becomes the combination of Martha Stewart and Dear Abby.

Her thesis - everyone can realize their dreams if only they look beyond the baggage they choose to carry. She manages to help Barbara to a rekindled marriage, Stephanie to evict her worthless son, Ellen to start on a fourth husband with less fatal,

we hope, results. Natasha's evil plots turn back on her and she gets her "just do." Nothing can be done for Natasha as she continues in her delightful lunacy.

Katrina's dreams nearly come to ruin. Her original high school lover, played by Michael Boyd, brings his life, a self described "vortex of unspeakable grief," and lays it at Katrina's feet with a renewed spark. Blake Senseman, elegant hero in so many Guild dramas, is the ultimate red-neck who auditions as Ellen's fourth husband, only to find that marriage is rejected by his overbearing mother.

As I presaged, all comes to a happy ending. Even happier is the fact that the play continues through December 13th. Plenty of chances for my readers to have as much fun as the cast! Call 937 278 5993 and get tickled all over – I promise.

See **Romp** on page 22

Natalie Portman Orlando Bloom Bradley Cooper Cloris Leachman Julie Christie

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