

Entertainment

Review: 'Little Shop of Horrors' in South Fallsburg

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SOUTH FALLSBURG — Its title might suggest "minimal," but Friday night's opening production of "Little Shop of Horrors" by the Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop was rather monumental. Staged by a cast of 14, the show was as marvelous as any in recent memory, and coming to enjoy the engaging presentation were enough playgoers to nearly fill the large Rivoli Theatre, a former movie house.

Directed by Lori Schneider-Wendt, the musical features fine singing, an impressive roll-around set and excellent acting. Filling the role of Seymour to perfection, Scott M. Eckers captures all the idiosyncracies of the poor and timid young man who struggles to make a living selling flowers. In Mushnik's florist shop, he bemoans his life in skid row, trips over himself and harbors a crush on co-worker Audrey.

But following the discovery of a weird plant whose phenomenal growth attracts the attention of World Botanical Enterprises, everything changes. With fame, Eckers' character is enticed to co-own the shop, and Seymour and the boss celebrate with a ravishing song and dance in "Mushnik & Son."

As Mushnik, the formerly sly and cranky boss who soon enough savors the growth in business, Richard Topper captures the anger as well as the ecstasy of his enigmatic character with complete and convincing changes in expressive face and fluid body.

Central to the plot is Audrey II, and effectively "playing" the plant that keeps growing is Tom DeFavero, whose booming voice demands ever more human blood to survive. In time, the VW-sized plant even devours people whole.

The plant's namesake, Audrey, gets a flaky and sexy portrayal by blond Abby Smassanow, who delivers a wistful singing of "Somewhere That's Green" as her character dreams of Seymour and the amenities of a suburban life with him.

Anything but charming, however, is Audrey's former boyfriend, dentist Orin Scrivello, whose egotistical and sadistic character is effectively played by Timothy Buckley. The actor boldly struts, kicks a homeless man in front of the shop and snaps fingers for control. Meanness aside and funny instead is "It's Just the Gas" as, in the closing moments of Act 1, he suffers convulsions while wearing a helmet and overdosing on nitric gas.

An interesting throwback to ancient Greek drama is the use of Ebony Isaac, Crystal Tweed and Jennifer Lemitelamy as a trio of observers and participants who, throughout the show, express comments on the people and plot. With a combination of close harmony, blended voices and equally smooth body movements, the young women show the promise of careers in show business.

The winning show also features effective choreography by Jane Lawski, efficient set design by Schneider-Wendt and Harold Tighe, colorful costume design by Ed Berens and fine orchestral support directed by Annie Hat.

IF YOU GO ...

What: "Little Shop of Horrors"

Where: Rivoli Theatre, 437 Main St., South Fallsburg

When: 8 p.m. Aug. 13-14, 2 p.m. Aug. 15

Tickets: \$15, \$12 senior citizens, \$7 students with ID

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