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Review: 'The Producers' in South Fallsburg

Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop puts on a wild show

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Richard Chiger, Scott M. Eckers and Kristin Hackett flaunt it in "The Producers."
Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop

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By Marcus Kalipolites

For the Times Herald-Record

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SOUTH FALLSBURG — Like the athletes who recently played to lose in order to win over a lesser team in the next round of the London Olympics, Max and Leo as "The Producers" plan a theater flop to reap big money from investors. Except, it doesn't quite work out that way.

Written by Mel Brooks, this musical play boasts colorful characters, galvanizing songs and even some romance. And Sunday afternoon, the Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop staged a dazzling production worthy of equity status.

Central to the story is Max (Richard Chiger), who with authoritative and convincing voice brags about the biggest hits he used to have in "The King of Broadway" as cast members celebrate his stature with all kinds of dance routines.

Enter Leo (Scott M. Eckers), a young accountant with a security blanket (a patch of cloth) who, after he figures a \$2,000 profit on Max's previous show of \$98,000 gross receipts, joins the boss in a scheme to replicate the results in a boisterous "We Can Do It." But after a second thought of conscience by the accountant, the would-be partners diverge in a duet of counterpoint as the younger man succumbs with "I can't do it."

Soon enough, Leo returns to his accounting office, savors a sexy dream sequence with show girls, gets fired and belatedly boasts in ebullient song, "I Wanna Be a Producer." So with his return to Max, the union is complete as they scrounge for the worst possible scripts.

Having to offer "Springtime for Hitler" is Franz Leibkind (Sal Polichetti), a nutty Nazi with helmet and liederhosen, but conditions before a deal can be closed find Max and Leo joining Franz in a comedic frolic of folk dancing and clapping in "Der Guten Tag Hop-Clop."

Search for a director leads them to Roger de Bris (Timothy Buckley) whose metallic gown and ditzzy movements seal the picture of the self-assured drag queen who leads chief of staff Carmen Ghia (Ed Berens), Max, Leo and his Gay Team in a laughable "Keep It Gay" routine. With that agreement closed, the schemers join their new secretary, Ulla (Kristin Hackett), who shakes, wiggles and romps in her sexy "When You Got It, Flaunt It" number.

If you go ...

What: "The Producers," staged by Sullivan County Dramatic Workshop

Where: Rivoli Theatre, 437 Route 42, South Fallsburg

When: 8 p.m. Aug. 17-18, 2 p.m. Aug. 19

Admission: \$18, \$15 senior citizens, \$10 students with ID

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With newfound confidence, Max, Leo and the gang close out the first act with a rousing "we can do it," but not before a bevy of gray-haired old ladies scoot and dance an extravaganza with their walkers.

In introducing the new show, usherettes Ebony Isaac and Alyssa O'Keeffe kick off with an upbeat "Opening Night" number. And instead of a "good-feel" send off, the principals agree "It's Bad Luck to Say Good Luck on Opening Night," following which Franz breaks a leg.

With great reviews in several newspapers and in line for a Pulitzer Prize, Max and Leo wonder "Where Did We Go Wrong?"


But not withstanding the fortuitous missteps by Max and Leo, this SCDW production directed by Lori Schneider-Wendt surely ranks among the best in recent memory. And helping to make it so is the 12-piece orchestra directed by Kevin Scott, a cast of more than two dozen, the choreography of Kimberly Schneeberger and Ebony Isaac as well as the multifaceted costumes designed by Ed Berens.

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