

Dragon Theatre has a hit with 'Smash' - - San Mateo Daily Journal



Dragons Productions Theatre Company
'Smash' is a rewarding, amusing two hours of theater.

Married only 20 minutes, a groom leaves his bride to launch his plan to overthrow the British government.

Thus Jeffrey Hatcher's "Smash" takes the Dragon Theatre audience through a witty satire of romance, education, socialism and lofty but misguided goals.

Hatcher based this two-act play on 1883's "The Unsocial Socialist," the last novel George Bernard Shaw wrote before starting to write plays.

Hence Shaw aficionados will recognize themes and character types that figure into his plays.

In "Smash," the time is moved up to spring 1910. The groom is Sidney Trefusis (William J. Brown III), a rich socialist, while his beloved bride is Henrietta Jansenius (Katie Rose Krueger), daughter of a wealthy man.

Disguising himself as a laborer he calls Mengels, Sidney goes to Alton College for women. Since its students are being groomed to become the wives of England's most powerful men, Sidney plans to indoctrinate them with the ideals of socialism, which they will pass on to their husbands-to-be to begin a revolution.

Complicating matters, one of the students, the spunky, rebellious Agatha Wylie (Sarah Benjamin), falls in love with him. Their main nemesis is Alton's headmistress, the formidable Miss Wilson (Shelley Lynn Johnson).

Another complication arises when Henrietta and her father, Mr. Jansenius (Paul Stout), an Alton trustee and Agatha's godfather, arrive for Founders Day.

Henrietta pretends not to recognize Sidney, but she's instrumental in bringing about his comeuppance.

Vickie Rozell skillfully directs the 10-member ensemble cast, with each actor evoking the wit of the writing and the characters' quirks.

Completing the cast are Kendall Callaghan and Laura Henricksen as Alton students; Evan Michael Schumacher and Brian Flegel as the men who love them; and Nicolae Muntean as the school's longtime handyman.

Lighting and the ivy-walled set by Michael Palumbo work well on Dragon's small stage. Handsome period costumes are by Y. Sharon Peng.

Before Act 2, the sound design by Lance Huntley fittingly features music by Gilbert and Sullivan, whose operettas skewered English society in the late 19th century.

Thanks to this well done production, "Smash" is a rewarding, amusing two hours of theater.

It will continue at Dragon Theatre, 2120 Broadway, Redwood City, through May 4. For tickets and information call (650) 493-2006 or visit www.dragonproductions.net.