

LCTC’s ‘Tender’ Season Finale

‘Tender Trap’ Takes The Stage At The Dakota Theatre Feb. 6-11

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Love will be in the air at the Dakota Theatre just in time for Valentine’s Day when the Lewis & Clark Theatre Company (LCTC) presents the romantic comedy, “The Tender Trap,” as the final show of its 2012-13 season next week.

In the play by Max Shulman and Robert Paul Smith, Charlie Reader (Ben Gothier) is a salesman who is living a seemingly idyllic life as a bachelor in New York, with numerous women coming and going from his apartment.

Charlie is visited by his life-long friend, Joe McCall (Randy Fields). Joe, who is married and has children, tells Charlie the excitement is gone from his marriage, and he envies Charlie’s carefree life. Charlie, on the other hand, says he admires Joe’s life with his family.

“(Charlie) gets caught up in the women that come around, and at some point in the play, it kind of catches up to him,” said director Gene Johnson. “He falls in love with two different women and he has trouble reconciling which one he wants to marry. (Joe) comes to realize that what he has is actually a pretty good deal, too. By the end of the play, everybody pretty much gets what they want.”

Johnson added that the play, which will be presented Feb. 6-11, is much more than just a feel-good story.

“It’s got a lot of lessons about love and marriage — what a wife is, and what a man should expect from a wife versus a girlfriend,” he said.

Johnson said the play should appeal to all types of audience members, regardless of whether they are in a relationship.

“I think with the different characters in the play, each person will see something different. There’s something for everybody — people who are married, not married or single,” he said. “There are some characters in the play that act and say things where many people might say, ‘Yeah, I think I feel the same way.’”

Johnson said many people might be familiar with the 1955 film of the same name starring Frank Sinatra as Charlie. And while the play and movie share many aspects, there are also some substantial differences.

“The main character in the play is a salesman for a pharmaceutical company, whereas Frank Sinatra’s character in the movie is a talent agent,” Johnson said. “I think they changed that so Frank Sinatra could sing and dance in the movie, which is what people want to see when they see him. There really isn’t any of that in the play. So there’s a lot of parts and dialogue that are almost spot on, and then there’s departures in the movie that are completely different.”

Although the play doesn’t feature much music, the director said those who are hoping to hear Sinatra’s “(Love Is) the Tender Trap” shouldn’t leave disappointed.

“I have a feeling maybe we’ll sneak it in somewhere,” he said.

This is Johnson’s first stint as director for the LCTC, and while he previously has served as a co-director, he said he has learned much from his current experience working with a talented supporting staff and cast.

“I teach them a lot, but they show me a lot, too,” he said.

Additional cast members include Stacie Peitz as Poppy Matson, Renee Hansen as Jessica Collins, Vicki Geiser as Sylvia Crewes, Jessica Sahagun as Julie Gillis, Pete Rossiter as Earl Linquist and Nathan Porras as Sol Schwartz.

Johnson added that working with this cast also has led to a few positive surprises.



The Lewis and Clark Theatre Co. closes out its season with a production of “The Tender Trap” at the Dakota Theatre in Yankton Feb. 6-11. Cast members include, front from left: Renee Hansen, Jessica Sahagun, Ben Gothier, Vicki Geiser and Stacie Peitz; back row: Pete Rossiter and Randy Fields. Not pictured: Nathan Porras. For more photos, see page 8B. To see or purchase photos from this production, visit spot-ted.yankton.net. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)

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