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BEHIND THE RENO MUSICAL: WHERE IMPROV MEETS MUSICAL COMEDY- A RENAISSANCE ON THE STAGE

The Utility Players Talk About the Creation of Their First Musical

Reno, NV, December 17, 2009: The Utility Players, Reno's premiere comedy variety troupe, are currently gearing up to showcase their musical this December. The comedy troupe has taken the past three months to develop a storyline, construct a script, write original lyrics, and compose an original score for the production, making this Reno's first all-original musical comedy production. The group, when they are not writing and rehearsing their weekly show at the Studio on 4th, is busy learning dance steps or training their voices in preparation for the upcoming musical. "We're absolutely insane for putting this thing on," relates writer, comedian, and principal player Ian Sorensen. Sorensen goes on to say, "fortunately that's our best creative mindset. We love musicals and we love comedy, so why not?" Director of the Utility Players and principal player, Erin Slimak, jests that, "most musical productions are three years in the making, and we are creating ours in a little over three months, we must be crazy."

The Utility Players – The Musical – which takes place in Reno (of course), relates the somewhat fictional tale of the formation of the Utility Players. From a clandestine meeting at an open mic, to forming a comedy troupe and battling an evil, laughter-stealing comic, the Utility Players demonstrate the power of laughter and the strength that we can find both within ourselves and within those around us. According to writer and principal player Shane Tolomeo, "The plot of the musical is an infusion of thoughts from all of the Utility Players. When we decided to write a musical in 3 months, we had no idea what we were going to write about. We wanted something that would show the Utility Players uniting towards a common goal." Tolomeo has spent the past several weeks compiling the script based upon the ideas and suggestions of the whole troupe. Tolomeo further asserts that, "Some call us crazy for producing a musical in 3 months; I call it innovative and fearless."

The music and lyrics for the musical are an all-original score created by the Utility Players with the help of their secret weapon—the incredibly enigmatic Reno musician and producer known only as "yjovian". The score is a complementary hodge-podge of campy group numbers, soulful laments, beat-boxing raps, and cabaret-style numbers. Comedian and Principal Player Joshua Inwood notes, "We approached writing the songs like we approach writing sketches. We came up with an initial idea for the song and then worked through the songs as a group incorporating everyone's ideas and suggestions." The songs serve to tell not only the story of the Utility

Players, but each of the Players wrote their own piece, revealing who they are as a performer and person. According to Brandon Iron, writer and principal player of the Utility Players, “Each of us is so radically different with a plethora of backgrounds and interests. It’s incredible seeing the creative process mesh and meld into one amazing experience”.

The musical is unique in the fact that the Utility Players are incorporating some of their improv games and exercises into the musical. Putting improv into the musical ensures that every time the musical is performed it is an entirely different production. Host and producer of the Utility Players, Jessica Levity, states, “Audience participation is a major key to our shows, for it creates incredible energy and engages audiences into what is going on; it makes them a part of the show, and entertainment like that is more than just fun, it’s genuine and unique.” Levity further goes on to say that, “Just because we were doing a musical we didn’t want to omit that component, we wanted to create a dynamic experience.” Levity jokes that there may be times in the show where she busts through the “4th Wall” of theater like the Kool-Aid Man and interacts directly with the audience.

The musical also features a number of local community members to complete the full cast. Two of those members include the manager of the Utility Players – Miss Ginger Devine – and the most recent addition to the Utility Players – Joe Garton – who has stepped in to help the Utility Players with lighting. Miss Devine – a musical enthusiast – shouts, “It has always been a dream of mine to perform in a musical.” Miss Devine plays the evil witch who guides the villain on his path of destruction, as well as the fairy godmother extraordinaire who flies in to help the Utility Players when all seems lost. “In the immortal words of the one Miss Miley Cyrus, I ‘get the best of both worlds’,” relates Devine. Joe Garton, a teacher at Hug High School, plays the intrepid villain in the musical, hell bent on taking out his revenge on the Utility Players and the world.

The Utility Players – The Musical is currently scheduled for a one-night-only engagement, but the troupe is excited to take the musical to different performance spaces and cities. Levity admits, “The last song of this musical is called *We’re Not Stopping ‘Til We’re Famous*, and we’re not. This musical was written with a very specific intention; it is the synthesis of the Players’ creative, personal, and comedic selves. There is so much truth in our humor, and so much humor in our truth. There has never been anything like this musical, and because it’s based in improv, every time we do it, it lives and it dies in that one, unique moment. It’s an absolute Renaissance on the stage.”

The premiere of Utility Players – the musical – is scheduled for December 17th at 8pm at the Studio on 4th – 432 E. 4th St. As always, admission to the Comedy Cabaret is by donation in an effort to keep comedy affordable and accessible to all. For more information about the musical or the Utility Players make sure to check out our website at www.utilityplayerscomedy.com

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