

Theatre Aurora's Noises Off: A Review



By **Scott Johnston**

Ever have one of those days where nothing goes right? Well, that's what the director of the fictional play 'Nothing On?' has in Theatre Aurora's current production of 'Noises Off?.'

And it's only going to get worse.

Written by English playwright Michael Frayn, but given an Ontario-based background in this production, this is a play within a play. In it, a long-suffering director is trying to get his touring theatre performers through one last rehearsal before opening night.

Unfortunately, everything that can go wrong, does, from badly-timed entrances, to flubbed lines, to misplaced props, to missing performers. But these are merely pre-opening night hiccups, and surely by the time the play has been performed a few times, the cast will have jelled, and things will flow smoothly, right?

Unfortunately for him, and fortunately for us, the answer is 'no?', because we soon find out through two subsequent performances in their 'tour?' that spending too much time together has seriously strained the many already tenuous interpersonal relationships between the company's players, with hilarious results.

While people may remember the 1992 movie version of Noises Off, it is much better seen as a live performance, where the frantic action can best be enjoyed.

As the story develops, the pacing accelerates, and the humour comes at you from many directions. At times, there's so much going on on stage, both in front of, and behind the scenes, it's hard to know where to look, or which characters to follow.

Director Neill Kernohan and his group of actors do a wonderful job in keeping the pacing going, deftly juggling closely-timed entrances and exits, and a wide variety of props.

The terrific nine-member ensemble, many of them Theatre Aurora veterans, immerse themselves so well in their roles, work so well together, and handle the complex action and dialog so adeptly, that there are no true standouts.

The players include Kirsty Campbell as middle-aged TV star Dotty Otley, Alex Leahy as contact lens-challenged inexperienced actress Brooke Ashton, Jess Falcioni, as sensible actress Belinda Blair, Claire Katz as assistant stage manager Poppy Norton-Taylor,

Chis Cluff as harassed director Lloyd Dallas, Joey Nessuno as leading man Garry Lejeune, Stefan Porfirio as nosebleed-prone actor Frederick Fellowes, John Fetherston as aging classical actor Selsden Mowbray and Tim Gernstein as over-worked stage manager Timothy Allgood.

This production is a lot of fun, with great pacing, and provides a wonderful wrap up to the 2024-25 season.

Evening performances of ?Noises Off? continue at Theatre Aurora, 150 Henderson Drive, May 2, 3, 8, 9 and 10, with matinees May 3 and 10. Tickets are available through the box office at 905-727-3669.