

The Fantasticks

Michigan Tech's theatre season gets off to a rousing start November 2-5 with the Fine Arts Department's production of "The Fantasticks," the musical comedy by Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jones, in McArdle Theatre. Four performances, at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, November 2-4, and 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 5, will feature student actors and musicians, and showcase the talents of Fine Arts' sound, lighting, set and costume designers. Sue Stephens and Milton Olsson direct the show.

"The Fantasticks" made New York stage history as the longest-running musical ever, more than 17,000 performances, and is a favorite on college campuses. Sue Stephens attributes the show's popularity to its great script and memorable songs. "The play is sweet, moving, funny, poignant, and it says something worth listening to," Stephens says. "Plus, the songs are lovely and hummable." "The Fantasticks" gives a modern twist to a classic tale of youth, innocence, temptation, and adversity. Carefree young lovers Luisa and Matt, played by Tony Lowe and MartaLisbet Loman, share trials and tribulations which start with their bumbling, feuding fathers (actors Matt Rossman and Adam Sommerfield), who are alternately helped and hindered by the dashing rogue El Gallo (Christopher Schwartz)--think Captain Jack Sparrow. A variety of characters (played by Laura Pirkola-Black, Lukas Showerman, and Dave Clark) aid the fathers or the lovers as the plot unfolds.

The light-hearted story contains a message that audiences have appreciated through the years, Stephens notes: that some trouble on the journey from innocence to experience, and some losses, are often a necessary part of reaching maturity. "The Fantasticks" "shows that superficial feelings, being in love with love (and with one's self), won't blossom into true caring for another person," she observes.

The performances feature Emily Fisher (piano), Michelle Foy (percussion), Bethany Lambrecht (xylophone), and Mitch Schuh (bass), directed by Milton Olsson. Pavi Elle Poole, Dan Gossens, Jonathon Branson, and John Lyons, students in Michigan Tech's technical theatre program, designed costumes, set, lights and sound, working with faculty advisors Mary Carol Friedrich and Christopher Plummer. Technical director Melissa Hitchcock and scene shop supervisor Dennis Kerwin supervised backstage crews. Colin Brandt, stage manager, and Jessica Tracey, theatre electrician, played key backstage roles.

Tickets for "The Fantasticks" are available from the Rozsa Center Box Office (487-3200, www.tickets.mtu.edu) and at the door for \$10 general public, \$5 students.