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VENANGOLAND

LIFE, CULTURE, ARTS AND POLITICS IN THE SMALL CITY, POSTED FROM FRANKLIN, PA, VENANGO COUNTY. I TEACH AT FHS, LIVE RIGHT BY THE RIVER, PLAY IN AN OLD TRADITIONAL TOWN BAND, AND WRITE A WEEKLY COLUMN FOR THE DERRICK AND NEWS-HERALD (EVERY THURSDAY FOR OVER TEN YEARS). FOR ALL THE FRIENDS, FAMILY AND FORMER STUDENTS WHO COMPLAIN THAT THE NEWSPAPER DOESN'T PUT THE COLUMNS ON LINE, HERE THEY ARE, PLUS WHATEVER ELSE COMES UP AND A COLLECTION OF LINKS TO THE PEOPLE AND PLACES OF VENANGO COUNTY.

SATURDAY, JULY 19, 2014

How To Succeed Succeeds

It's unfortunate that my wife and I were out of town and didn't get to see FCOA's production of *How to Succeed in Business* until last night. Otherwise, I could have spent this whole week encouraging you to come see this production before it closes out Sunday afternoon.

Ben Geibel have mounted a fun production of the classic show that is perfectly cast. Cameron Ashbaugh pulls off the difficult task of playing anti-hero J. Pierpont Finch by exuding such sweet cheerfulness that you overlook how much he behaves like a self-serving jerk.

Ben Bodamer is a perfect Bud Frump, giving a lively performance that pops right off the stage without actually ever being sympathetic (that is harder than it sounds). Carissa McClintock is most often seen as a gifted character actress, but here she completely pulls off the leading ingenue role, giving it a bit more depth and edge than might otherwise be expected. And Katie Kirby brings a little something extra to what could be a simple cartoon bimbo role.

There are unexpected treats as well. I've seen Tracy Brown in several roles for FCOA, and she is always capable and competent, but the part of Smitty seems to land right in her zone; she really shines in this

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production. Recasting the voice of the book as a duo, played by Andrew and Aaron Ritsig turns out to be genius; after seeing it done this way, I can't imagine doing it any other way. And relative newcomer Ryan Ingram as J. B. Biggley owns the stage every time he's on it. This is a hilarious character performance of the highest order.

There is also great support work from Jeremy Moser, Kelsey Viertel, Kevin Fox, Janie Cassady, Davin Cutchall, and Bill Hennesy. From Moser's chipmunk cheer to Viertel's bowling moves, the supporting cast adds many touches that keep the evening light and funny.

It's rare to see a community theater productions that are so strong vocally, but each one of the songs (some of which you remember fondly and some of which you'll be happy to become reacquainted with) is strong and solid. Every lead presents a musical moment that is strong and assured, and the ensemble provides great vocal backup. There are some great dance moments as well.

The production design is awesome, from the floating leg panels in a perfect pallet of period colors to the beautifully constructed rotating stage and the spot-on costuming, this is a fun show just to look at. And Geibel's stage direction keeps things moving. If you've seen this show in the past, you may remember it as one of those shows that seems to drag on forever (particularly Act I), but that is not the case here. The show moves forward with a breezy (but unhurried) pace. It's over before you realize it. McConnell's steady direction and a solid pit even manage to set perfect tempos for each tune.

It's funny, it's tuneful, it's easy on the eyes, it's well-acted, and perfectly sung. I'm not sure what else you could want from an evening of musical comedy. Saturday night at 7:30 and Sunday at 2:00 are your last chance to catch this show. You should take advantage of the opportunity.

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POSTED BY PETER GREENE AT 7/19/2014 09:24:00 AM 1 COMMENTS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2013

Christmas Play List

ABOUT ME



PETER GREENE

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Just part of my goal to make Venangoland a household word. Get a mug, a hoodie or a tote bag at the [official Venangoland store!](#)

VENANGOLAND BOOK CLUB

Okay, it's not really a club. I'm just blogging about what I've read, with links to amazon. Because I think the world would be better if more people read more books, and I have a few thoughts about which books would be good to read... [Just click here to see what's on my bookshelf at the moment.](#)

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