

LIFE & ARTS



'9 to 5 The Musical' delivers comedy, empowerment

Amanda Monahan
Life & Arts Editor

Tumble out of bed and stumble to Smothers Theatre to see Pepperdine's production of "9 to 5 The Musical," packed with laughter and iconic hits from Dolly Parton.

The Pepperdine Theatre and Music Department's production of the classic show opens Friday, Nov. 15 in Smothers Theatre at 7:30 p.m.

The show is directed and choreographed by Kelly Todd, assistant instructor of Theatre, Musical Theatre emphasis coordinator and Theatre Department coordinator. Todd said the department's season is chosen by the entire theatre faculty, three student representatives and staff input from the Lisa Smith Wengler Center for the Arts.

"9 to 5 The Musical" is set in the 1970s, featuring music and lyrics written by the legendary Dolly Parton.

"The story follows three secretaries as they get revenge on their terrible boss and change the culture of their workplace while learning to love one another and lean into their personal strength," Todd said.

Junior Zoe O'Donnell leads the show as Violet Newstead. After being rejected for a promotion at her job after working there for so long, Violet meets two new friends: Doralee Rhodes, played by junior Lucy Schene and Judy Bernly, played by junior Tessa Hemphill. The three described the story as three women lifting each other up as they battle gender issues in the 1970s.

"It's kind of sending that message that women have the ability to make change, and the change is always possible," Hemphill said. "And I think that's something that a lot of people would like to hear."

In addition to the important themes within the show,

Hemphill described many of the scenes as "hilarious." All three leads said the show is filled with fun music and comedic scenes.

Schene said playing a role originally played by Dolly Parton is exciting, but knows she has big shoes to fill.

"I've never played such an iconic role where people are walking in and expecting to see Dolly Parton," Schene said. "I definitely, you know, didn't want to imitate Dolly Parton, but I wanted to emulate her."

Auditions for "9 to 5 The Musical" took place during the first week of school, and the leads said the entire cast has been working tirelessly since then to perfect all aspects of the show. Schene said they rehearse for four hours a night, six days a week, with Sundays as their only day off. As they have now been leading up to opening night, they have been rehearsing on Sundays as well.

Not only does the cast have to focus on getting their lines, choreography and musical numbers down, but they also do all the behind-the-scenes work as well — they spend a good chunk of their time building and painting the sets and crafting their costumes.

Since the cast were only recently able to rehearse inside the theater, they could finally add in props, costume pieces, lights, sound and projections. Hemphill said they are moving along steadily as they overcome this hurdle.

O'Donnell said she believes the show possesses timely, important messages about women that everyone deserves to hear.

"Especially now, it's a great message to show women are capable of way more than society expects them to be," O'Donnell said. "They can be mothers, they can be CEOs and they can also be sexy and smart and they can also be hardworking and single."

Furthering these sentiments, O'Donnell said this message can extend beyond the issues of femininity seen today.

"I feel like especially now, it's hitting very hard with the amount of work that us as women do and how sometimes that doesn't get seen," O'Donnell said.

“It's kind of sending that message that women have the ability to make change, and the change is always possible.”

Tessa Hemphill
as Judy Bernly

Schene said everyone who can should come see the show and enjoy its powerful messages, fun musical numbers and hilarious dialogue. Despite being set in the 1970s, it shows these issues are not rare or restricted only to the past.

"I'm proud of Pepperdine for putting on this production," Schene said. "I think it is the most important story that we could be telling right now, and it's not an easy story to tell."

Todd said "9 to 5 The Musical" is based on an iconic film, which brings loads of fun to any audience. She recommends everyone come see the show for a variety of reasons.

"I hope they leave feeling more connected to their neighbor, their community and to the arts," Todd said.

The show will run until Nov. 23 in Smothers Theatre. Tickets cost \$23 for the public and \$10 for students, faculty and staff.

Students perform during the "9 to 5 The Musical" dress rehearsal Nov. 12. The show features three female leads: Zoe O'Donnell, Lucy Schene and Tessa Hemphill.



Photos by Mary Elisabeth | Photo Editor

