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Theater review: Theatre Three's musical comedy '[title of show]' is company's sharpest offering of the season

12:00 AM CDT on Thursday, April 29, 2010

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Do you have to know who Mary Stout is to enjoy *[title of show]*? How about this easier example: [Betty Comden](#) and [Adolph Green](#)?

Jeff Bowen and Hunter Bell wrote this musical about writing a musical about writing a musical. The show finally made it to Broadway, where Bowen and Bell played themselves. Theatre Three's production, which opened on Monday, of course doesn't feature the creators. It's the company's sharpest, most consistent show of the season anyway.

Alexander Ross plays Jeff. Chad Peterson is Hunter. Marianne Galloway and Tricia Ponsford play their friends Susan and Heidi. We see them decide to write a show for an upcoming festival, debate what to put in and what to leave out, and go through anticipation and elation as the new musical heads to off-Broadway and finally to the [Great White](#) Way itself.

Provisionally, the answer to the questions in the first paragraph is, "No." *[Title of show]* gets laughs from simple jokes about what the audience can see right in front of its eyes, like moving a chair across the stage to change the scene. Of course, opening-night audiences at Theatre Three are full of theater folks, so this one got even the most abstruse allusions, as well.

Coached by director Bruce R. Coleman and musical director Terry Dobson, playing the keyboard onstage throughout, the four performers exude charm and personality. Peterson sparkles in all the snap-happy gay jokes. Ross creates a sweet, gentle portrait of the composer. Galloway is hilarious as the hard-boiled comedian, the kind of role Comden often created for herself to play. Ponsford plays the more glamorous type, a little miffed she's not the funniest female onstage.

The script constantly reminds us that it's not going to pull punches for grandmas or kids with tender ears. The characters even tote up the number of bad words they use. This might be a problem for some theatrical audiences, especially since musicals are proverbially aimed at older audiences or families.

We'll find out whether Theatre Three can attract enough hip theater fans to *[title of show]* to make it a



NAN COULTER/Special Contributor
The cast of *[title of show]*, (from left) Chad Peterson, Tricia Ponsford, Terry Dobson, [Alexander Ross](#) and Marianne Galloway, is excellent. You needn't be an insider to enjoy the musical about writing a musical.

success at the box office. It has certainly gone all out to do the piece justice. Plan your life

Through May 23 at Theatre Three in the Quadrangle, 2800 Routh St. Runs 110 mins. \$10 to \$40.
214-871-3300. www.theatre3dallas.com.